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ABSTRACT

This report examines personal, cultural, school, and family factors that contribute to the decision of American Indian students to remain in school until graduation or to drop out. A 140-item questionnaire, the Native American School Study, was completed by 165 participants who had either graduated or dropped out of school during 1989-91. Respondents lived on reservations in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In addition, 76 graduates and 37 dropouts were interviewed at length. Factors examined in the questionnaire and interview included substance abuse by self or family members, peer pressure, trouble with the law, self-esteem, teen pregnancy, family structure, socioeconomic status, parent education, academic achievement, teacher attitudes and expectations, school attendance, abuse by school personnel, tribal self-identity and pride, discrimination and racism, and bilingualism. Results indicate that respondents who dropped out of school demonstrated significant differences from graduates in self-esteem, frequency of skipping school, teacher expectations and attitudes, and grade retention. During interviews, the themes of poverty, self-esteem, and teacher attitudes repeatedly surfaced. Graduates frequently reported that family expectations (particularly those of the mother and grandmother) kept them in school. This report contains a lengthy literature review; recommendations to educators, policymakers, parents, and Indian communities; and many references in endnotes. (SV)

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ED 373 951

# *OERI Native American Youth At Risk Study*

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**March 30, 1994**

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# *Chapter 1*

## Dropping Out in America: A National Dilemma

Until the last half of the 1980s, the terms at-risk and high-risk were not used as descriptors in literature about dropouts. As the terms imply, much of the literature today seeks to identify the at-risk student or the potential dropout before he/she leaves school in an effort to provide intervention strategies.

Generally, researchers identify three types of at-risk students: (1) children who come from different cultural backgrounds or minority students, (2) children from limited English-speaking families, and (3) children from poor families.[1] Henry Levin described at-risk students as those defined in past literature as being educationally disadvantaged. He characterized these students as:

> . . . those who lack the home, and community resources to benefit from conventional schooling practices. Because of poverty, cultural obstacles, or linguistic differences, they tend to have low academic achievement and high dropout rates. Such students are heavily concentrated among minority groups, immigrants, non-English speaking families and economically disadvantaged populations.[2]

Levin's characterization of at-risk youth is a popular one. Throughout the research, "at risk" is often another code for "culturally deprived" and is frequently no more than the continued relabeling of disadvantaged students.

Research in the 80s has contributed significantly to the public's perception of dropouts and has been responsible for the recognition of the depth of the problem; however, much of the literature addresses the dropout problem and its future impact on the country.

Concern over the political and economic future of the country is not new. As early as the 1970s, researchers predicted that the absolute numbers of at-risk students and the degrees of their disadvantage would increase in the nation's schools within the next 20 years. Many researchers noted concerns about the growing, youthful minority population in America and the lack of success of minorities in school. Based on an analysis of the U.S. population, Harold Hodgkinson projected that by the year 2000, one-third of the nation's school children will be minority. Other research showed that dropout rates vary significantly by ethnicity and class and that these rates are the highest among American Indians, Blacks, and Hispanics. One national study examined the dropout rate from the sophomore to senior year using ethnic classifications and revealed that the dropout rates ranged from a low of 3.1% for Asian Americans to a high of 29.2% for American Indians. White students dropped out at a rate of 12.2%, Blacks at 17%, and Hispanics at 18%. More recent research reports that 8.9% of students from the highest socioeconomic class dropped out of school, while 22.3% of the dropouts came from the lowest socioeconomic class. These studies serve to demonstrate that the dropout problem in America is not restricted to the poor, inner-city minority youth, but that it is diverse in ethnic as well as class characteristics.[3]

Much of the literature on at-risk students or dropouts speaks to the impact of the problem on the country and society in general. It has been noted that youth who drop out are more likely to become economic burdens on society and are more likely to require public assistance. Business leaders and policy makers alike predict that the public will pay heavily for the high proportion of youth who drop out, creating an increased need for social and welfare programs. Educators argue, often unsuccessfully, that the investment required for dropout prevention would be substantially less than the eventual loss in productivity to the nation.[4]

Considerable attention has been paid to the labor market and the at-risk student. In the past, an economy existed to provide an orderly transition from dropping out to entry into numerous labor occupations. Such an economy no longer exists; therefore, dropping out of school often leads to no employment, or to underemployment in low-paid, often part-time jobs. Other researchers suggest that General Educational Development (GED) certificate-holders do not do as well in the labor market as high school graduates. In 1986, the United States Accounting Office reported that males who drop out of high school are estimated to earn $441,000 less during their lives than males who are high school graduates. Given the low salaries earned by dropouts across their working career, the nation stands to lose $71 billion in social security predicated on a 25% dropout rate.[5]

Some researchers have reported that not only are high school dropouts expected to be a massive drain on society through their dependence on welfare programs, but they are more likely to be involved in juvenile courts and prison systems. Since 1960, delinquency rates of teenagers have increased by 130%. In fact, it has been demonstrated in some research that failure to graduate from high school is a predictor of adult criminal activity.[6]

Other research points to a number of social problems in American society which place youth at risk. In 1984, the Alan Guttmacher Institute reported that each year 1.1 million teenage females become pregnant. Approximately 40% of the females who drop out of school do so for reasons related to pregnancy and marriage; however, the majority (60%) of females drop out for a variety of other reasons. In 1986, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that between 1950 and 1984, the rate of suicide among individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 had increased by 178%. Research has consistently demonstrated that the relationship between inappropriate attitudes toward health and self are strongly related to dropping out of school. In 1988, the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research reported that 58% of high school seniors have had experience with illicit drugs and that the increasing drug of choice is cocaine. The Institute also found that nearly two-thirds of high school seniors reported using alcohol.

## The Minority in Our Schools

Schools in America are geared to success, not failure. Historically, minority students from their earliest school experiences have been labeled as potential failures, their language criticized, and their origins suspect. Some researchers report that certain indigenous minorities have developed a culture of resistance to school and suggested that an "apathetic dominant society" has historically excluded the American Indian from the dominant culture. This in some ways has become a double-edged sword in that frequently American Indians have chosen to exclude themselves, thus exacerbating the situation.[7]

Research clearly indicates that Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians are more frequently alienated by school than Asian Americans and other new immigrants.

In fact, it has been found that Asians and new immigrants regard the school experience as a major path to success. Some researchers maintain that the nation's tolerance of exceedingly high dropout rates among certain minority groups is a manifestation of a social strategy designed to keep minorities out of the political decision making process. Given the fact that the typical high school dropout participates minimally in the political structure, they are less likely to become involved in political decision-making as adults and are therefore far less able to shape their own fates.[8]

There has been inadequate justification in the research for the differential achievement levels among minorities. Some researchers present genetic or biological factors as an explanation for minority underachievement. Others maintain that cultural factors along with socioeconomic structural factors provide an adequate explanation. It may be that students' resistance to learning should be viewed as rejection of the cultural values of the school and society; if they perceive the school as oppressive and destructive of their culture, the effects on students are devastating.[9]

Several researchers report that the use of culturally and linguistically congruent instructional approaches smooths the transition from school to home, whereas others suggest that such approaches are culturally incongruent or meaningless.[10]

Many researchers conclude that minority youth experience more factors associated with dropping out than the general population, such as poverty, school failure, dropping out, family problems, and involvement in the criminal justice and social welfare systems. In addition, they note that minority youth are more likely to come from families or environments with high rates of drug and alcohol abuse; therefore, they have a greater chance of residing under conditions that are conducive to dropping out of school.[11]

Two researchers, Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu, examined Black students' underachievement in school and proposed "fictive kinship" as a framework for understanding how a sense of collective identity enters into the process of schooling and affects academic achievement. The fear of being accused of "acting white" causes social and psychological situations which diminish Black students' academic efforts and leads to underachievement and, in many cases, dropping out.[12] There is some evidence to support that a similar force is at work with American Indian students.

Current research on dropouts in America demonstrates the diverse racial, ethnic, and class characteristics of at-risk youth. Most studies have inaccurately led us to believe that dropping out is only linked to minority populations. Recent research reveals that the problem is much more widespread.

## Summary

The current focus upon dropouts in America is undoubtedly timely. However, in American Indian educational circles, this issue is not a new concern. Historically, American Indian students have dropped out of school at higher rates than any other minority group in America. Despite the seriousness of the problem, little attention has been given to empirical analysis of the problem. Instead, many writers and researchers have offered explanations for the lack of success of American Indian students that fall into four major categories: (1) cultural differences between American Indians and the white system, (2) social disorganization within tribal groups and families, (3) poor self-concept of the American Indian students, or (4) low socioeconomic status.[13]

This study will seek to go beyond the generally accepted premises of cultural discontinuity and the "within child" deficit models of home and family and will examine not only the factors often attributed to dropping out, but will include factors generally not discussed in American Indian dropout research. For example, there is some evidence that American Indian students do poorly in school because of racial bias, discrimination, and ambivalence on the part of teachers. Historically, underachievement on the part of American Indian students may have resulted because white teachers and administrators refused to acknowledge that American Indian students were capable of intellectual achievement. Subsequently, American Indians began to doubt their own potential and began to define academic success as a "white man's" prerogative. As a result, American Indian students began to discourage their peers from emulating the "white man's" academic success by shaming those who were successful.

# Chapter 2

## American Indian Dropouts: What the Statistics Say

> ***When it is considered that our schools are placed among a wild people, who, from the oldest down to the youngest, have never known any control, but have lived independent, idle lives, with no higher law than the whim of the moment, that Indians unfriendly to civilization are constantly instilling into the minds of our pupils suspicion and dissatisfaction, and that 'all outside' seems as home to an Indian child habituated to a wild, roving life, and that the runaway is never at a loss, therefore, where to flee to, we may congratulate ourselves that our losses by desertion have been no more than they have been.***[1]

Despite all the research, we know very little about what makes some American Indian students successful in school and what makes others fail. We know even less about the American Indian female dropout. We do know, however, that dropout rates among American Indian youth have been historically the highest of any minority group and that the American Indian is the poorest, has the lowest educational level, lives in the worst housing, has the shortest life expectancy, and is the most poorly nourished minority group in the nation. Furthermore, we know that American Indians have the highest infant mortality rate among all ethnic minority groups in America. In 1970, L. Madison Coombs reported that "Indian people have been badly miseducated, have not progressed educationally, and, as a result are at the absolute bottom of the barrel among the country's ethnic minorities and socio-economically disadvantaged groups."[2] The situation, as described by Coombs, has not changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Others have suggested that the ramifications of the lack of education among American Indians guarantees the continuation of poverty and the demise of the American Indian people.[3]

## What the Statistics Say

In 1959, the Bureau of Indian Affairs conducted a study on Indian dropouts in Bureau boarding schools and concluded that a majority of Indian students drop out because of "poor adjustment to school." This category was defined as: over-aged, homesickness, parental request, AWOL, and drinking. Students themselves indicated that they dropped out of school because of "financial need" and a "dislike of school." Some students indicated they dropped out because they disliked the teachers or that the teachers were not interested in them. Many of the dropouts reported that they were unable to take part in the social life of the school or to participate in extra-curricular activities. A number of the dropouts reported being harassed and embarrassed by other students because of financial needs.

A 1966 study of American Indian students in federal schools showed that not only were the dropout rates high, but that in some schools the dropout rates were traditionally and consistently high, and in others few students finished the eighth grade.[4]

In 1968, the Northwest Regional Laboratory conducted a study on dropouts and reported that the largest percentage of dropouts cited lack of encouragement from the home as the major cause for dropping out; however, lack of encouragement from the school also ranked as a major cause for dropping out. Other causes mentioned included: poor financial and home conditions, lack of financial support, misbehavior resulting in expulsion or jail, irrelevancy of school to life, and problems with alcohol or drugs.[5]

Estimates of American Indian dropout rates vary from study to study; however, there is overwhelming evidence that American Indian students claim the distinction of the highest dropout rate among all ethnic groups.[6]

In 1969, the Senate Subcommittee Hearings on Indian Education reported the national dropout rate for Indian school children in all types of schools to be about 60%. In 1973, the Washington State Commission on Civil Rights estimated that the dropout rate for American Indians ranged somewhere between 38% and 60%. The National Advisory Council on Indian Education (1974) listed dropout rates in Nome, Alaska at 90%, in Minneapolis at 62%, and in parts of California at 70%. This was at a time when dropout rates nationally had peaked at 25%.

Recent statistics offer little improvement. Testimony at the Governor's Conference in Rapid City, South Dakota, in 1989 reported the dropout rate for the Lakota Sioux Indian students (located on nine reservations) in that state at "more than 50 percent." The State Department of Education in Wyoming (1988) listed the projected American Indian dropout rate within that state at 57.2% as compared to the state average for non-Indians at 20.4%. The state of Montana, which has nine language groups and seven reservations, does not report statewide data; however, reports from individual school districts within the state range from 85% to 14%. Theodore Coladarci reported on one high school district in Montana where, in 1980, 60% of the American Indian students (who comprised 90% of the district's student population) dropped out of school. The dropout level for non-Indians in the state of Montana is less than the national average, hovering at or near 12%.[7]

Currently the American Indian dropout rate has been reported at 65-30% nationally depending upon which study one reads. Regardless, this places American Indian youth with the highest high school dropout rate of any ethnic minority group in the country. Researchers have also reported that Indian students who attend boarding schools have especially high dropout rates.[8]

In a national study, *High School and Beyond*, it was reported that of all ethnic groups in America, the dropout rates for American Indians were the highest at 29.2%. Most American Indian educators, however, use caution when quoting this statistic. The study addressed what happened to students from their sophomore to senior years.[9] Educators who work with American Indian students recognize that a high percentage of American Indian dropouts never get to the tenth grade, dropping out somewhere between the seventh and ninth grade levels. A Los Angeles dropout study found that 14% more males left school earlier than females and that the common reason noted for dropping out among eleventh and twelfth graders was over-age. On the other hand, a Montana study explored factors relating to American Indian dropouts and reported that the decision to drop out was most often related to teacher-student relationships and teacher attitudes.[10]

A 1986 study of Oklahoma City Public Schools reported that the most frequent time for students to drop out of school was during the ninth or tenth grade. Of the dropouts, over half were from families with a low socioeconomic background and the students' most frequent reason for dropping out was lack of interest. Achievement scores of the Oklahoma City dropouts also indicated a history of below average achievement. Jerry Cavatta reported that male students dropped out more frequently than females and that American Indian students, at least in New Mexico, experienced their highest dropout rate during the tenth grade. In a subsequent study, Cavatta reported that American Indian students experienced their highest dropout rates during the ninth grade.[11]

In 1984, researchers reported the seriousness of the dropout problem among American Indians using the status of New Mexico youth as an example:

> New Mexico can serve as a microcosm of the conditions of Native Americans in the United States as a whole. . . . Thirty-two percent of young Native Americans aged 16 to 19 were neither working nor attending school. Less than half of Native Americans older than 25, in fact, had completed high school, compared to more than three-fifths of New Mexico's Blacks and almost three-fourths of whites. Native Americans, indeed, were the only racial/ethnic group in the state whose median level of education was below high school graduation.[12]

Karen Giles argued that cultural conflict is a major factor contributing to dropping out:

> As the child becomes increasingly aware of cultural and racial differences, he falls progressively below grade level norms. When the adolescent Indian internalizes his/her differences, feelings of inferiority and hopelessness corrode and disintegrate once-held dreams for a positive future. . . . The Indian's eventual reaction to this cultural differentiation often manifests itself as alienation, poor self-image, withdrawal and, in a word, dropout.[13]

The social and economic implications of the American Indian dropout have had little impact on the nation as a whole and have therefore received less attention by economists, educators, and politicians. The federal government, which is responsible for the funding of education for American Indians, even to varying degrees in public schools, has not chosen to publicly make an issue of the failures of an education system under its supervision. Politicians, who do not view the American Indian population as a strong political force, have long ignored the issue. American Indians themselves, in the last two decades, can share part of the blame for participation in an educational system which has perpetuated failure among their people.

Norbert Hill, an Oneida educator, reported that the American Indian high school dropout rate exceeds 65% nationally and that between 75-93% of post-secondary Indian students drop out; he pointed out that these statistics are only for students who leave school, and suggested that there are hundreds who "effectively drop out of school and physically never miss a day." Hill attributed dropping out to apathy and anomie:

> Our survivors as well as our dropouts of the formal education system have been forced into compliant, obedient roles which delimit the skill and confidence to manage the complexity of their lives and our future . . . The dropout problem is a problem of the dysfunctional education system which marginalizes students because of a narrow and discriminatory, social, political and economic agenda.[14]

# Chapter 3

## What Makes American Indian Students at Risk?

> ***Life for Indian adolescents is not easy. They are faced with poverty, poor educational systems, prejudice from the majority culture, and in general a disheartening outlook for the future. . . . It will be extremely difficult to change the future of these young people — to offer them a reasonable chance for personal and economic success.[1]***

In a national longitudinal study of eighth grade students in 1988, Harold Hodgkinson identified eight major factors contributing to the dropout problem for American Indian youth, including:

1. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the Indian eighth graders had repeated a grade at least once.
2. Nineteen percent (19%) of the Indian eighth graders expected to drop out of school before graduating.
3. Eleven percent (11%) of the eighth grade Indian students missed five or more days of school during a four-week period.
4. Only 17% of the eighth grade Indian students were planning to enroll in a college preparatory curriculum, as compared to 37% for Asian Americans, 31% for whites, 25% for Black Americans, and 22.5% for Hispanics.
5. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the Indian students reported living in single-parent homes, as compared to 17% of the white children.
6. Limited English was reported by 8.6% of the Indian students, as compared to 8.8% for Hispanic students, 7.1% for Asians, and 1.6% for Black Americans.
7. Fifteen percent (15%) of the eighth grade Indian students reported having an older sibling who had dropped out of school.

8. Nineteen percent (19%) of the Indian students reported being home alone more than three hours a day.[2]

In many ways, American Indian students who drop out mirror the larger society of student dropouts. They come from a distinct ethnic group; they are often from low income families; they frequently come from one-parent homes; the educational levels of their parents and older siblings often stop short of high school completion; they have often experienced repeated failure in school; they may be the products of dysfunctional families and physical and emotional abuse; they may come from homes where a language other than English is spoken; they may come from a family where drug and alcohol abuse is present; they may become pregnant during their adolescent years; and they may have experienced a variety of forms of racism, stereotyping, or discrimination from early childhood. On the other hand, many of the students who stay in school and graduate and even complete college come from identical backgrounds.

## What Researchers Say About Indian Dropouts

Most of the literature on American Indian education and the dropout problem has been confined to qualitative, ethnographic studies. A common theme throughout the research addresses the cultural differences and/or "cultural deprivation" of the American Indian child, the racial biases of white teachers, the negative self-image of American Indian children, drug/alcohol abuse, and language barriers.[3] American Indian students have often been the subject of cross-cultural research in which a comparison of the American Indian cultural values and the dominant American cultural values is made. Often this research suggests that American Indian students fail in school because of a value system which is different than the ideology within the school system. Other researchers maintain that the educational goals of schools are fashioned toward competitive achievement orientation of the American middle class and the attainment of material wealth. There is some evidence to support the fact that American Indians are willing to compete with their own past performances, but not with the performance of others. One researcher reported that while American Indian students often desire material things, the means to the end is vague, and that the delayed and obscure rewards of education are not associated with academic achievement in school. Some have gone so far as to maintain that scholastic competition is not valued in many American Indian homes, and thus failure in school is a given. Still other researchers have addressed the patterns of socialization of American Indian students and how they differ from the white dominant society, further undermining the American Indian child within the school setting.[4]

## The Correlates Associated with Dropping Out

There are literally hundreds of sources in the literature which discuss American Indian dropouts; however, there is relatively little research that addresses the reasons for dropping out. Nationally, there are three general correlates identified with dropping out. One correlate addresses personal problems of youth which tend to be independent of class and family background, including:

- substance abuse (alcohol and/or other drug use and abuse),
- problems with the law,
- low self-esteem/lack of self-identity,
- peer pressure,
- mental health problems such as depression (suicidal tendencies), and
- pregnancy.

A second correlate shows the relationship between dropping out and family background, including:

- socioeconomic status,
- educational level of parents,
- child-rearing practices,
- single-parent families, and
- dysfunctional families (including child abuse).

The final correlate addresses school factors, including:

- bilingualism,
- cultural differences/cultural discontinuity,
- academic achievement/failure including grade retention and tracking,
- attendance: truancy/absenteeism/detention/expulsion,
- teacher attitudes and expectations, and
- racism, discrimination, and prejudice.

It is important to examine the research related to the three major correlates addressed in dropout literature (personal problems, family background, and school factors) which are often attributed to the failure of American Indian youth. More importantly, however, a review of this literature serves to demonstrate that for each major correlate and subtopic area, many of the studies overlooked the complex nature of school failure for American Indian youth. For example, simply correlating alcohol abusing parents with dropping out, does not mean that such individuals will drop out; yet a student with such a home background will often be targeted as high risk by educators relying upon common identifiers of high-risk youth. Similarly, students who do not possess these common identifiers are often overlooked, although they may be at risk as well. Furthermore, an examination of past research demonstrates the notion that dropping out is often explained by pointing to factors inherently wrong with the child and not the system. This is particularly true of research conducted on American Indian dropouts.

## CORRELATE ONE:
## PERSONAL PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH

A number of factors have been identified as personal problems of youth at risk of dropping out of school. These factors (substance abuse, problems with the law, low self-esteem, peer pressure, mental health problems, and teen pregnancy) impact a high percentage of American Indian youth, if not directly, often indirectly. A review of the literature in each of these areas is pertinent to understanding the research conducted into the world of the American Indian child.

### Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is clearly a problem among American Indian youth, as is the case with other racial and ethnic groups including the mainstream, dominant society youth. Some research indicates that American Indian youth are particularly at risk due to biological predispositions as well as environmental factors where a high percentage of the adult population drinks or uses drugs. An examination of the research conducted in this area provides insight about the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs among American Indian adolescents and why some researchers suggest that substance abuse contributes to dropping out.

## Alcohol Use and Abuse

Alcohol is clearly the most abused substance among American Indian youth and has been linked to the high rates of suicide, accidents, crimes, dropping out, and birth defects. Over 75% of deaths among the American Indian population are related to alcohol abuse

Still, there are tremendous gaps in the research about the extent and nature of alcohol abuse among American Indian youth, and much of the research conducted before 1983 is characterized as inconclusive, lacking in detail, and inadequate for either theoretical or practical purposes. Furthermore, it was conducted on adult males rather than adolescents.

The most extensive study about American Indian adolescents and alcohol has been conducted by researchers at Colorado State University. They have reported that more than a third of American Indian adolescents use marijuana and alcohol on a regular basis, compared to 5% regular users among non-Indians.[5]

Other researchers have reported that Indian youth often begin using alcohol between the ages of 11 and 13 and that between 56% and 89% of Indian youth from most tribes report experimentation with alcohol.[6]

Adult substance abuse is common and visible on the reservations, exposing American Indian youth to negative adult role models. Reportedly there is a strong correlation between parental drinking and student drinking, and children who have older siblings who drink are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs. Some researchers have observed a statistically significant relationship between high levels of family drinking and alcohol abuse of children in later life, whereas other researchers maintained that substance abuse may not be regarded as deviant behavior among American Indian youth due to the frequency of exposure in their daily lives.[7]

Two studies in Montana found alcohol to be a major factor in the high dropout rates among American Indian males. In a survey of seven reservations in Montana, 33% of the juveniles ages 9-12 were regular drinkers and alcohol abuse was listed as the main reason why one in every two American Indian students in Montana did not graduate from high school. In another Montana study, approximately one-third of the dropouts reported peer pressure in the use of drugs and alcohol as a salient factor in the decision to drop out of school. Other researchers have reported that heavy drinking was the reason why one in two American Indian students nationwide never finish school.[8]

Some researchers have suggested that drinking patterns among Indian adolescents point to the stresses of acculturation and maintain that Indian youth have negative self-identity as a result of their acculturation experiences. Generally, the highest levels of alcohol abuse occur among American Indian adolescents who are acculturated and identify with non-Indian values, and the lowest levels of abuse have been found among students who express an adaptability to both Indian and non-Indian values. It is generally believed that American Indian adolescents from tribal groups with strong cultural identification are less apt to be involved in substance abuse.[9]

There is little research on alcohol abuse and American Indian women or girls. One researcher wrote:

> In the case of women, the attitude is quite different. In some situations and among some groups women are also under pressure to drink. In general, however, the woman who does not drink is respected and the woman who drinks is criticized.[10]

One important consideration in the relationship of Lakota males and females is the pressure of the peer group for the male to continue drinking. This behavior often leads to the dissolution of the male/female relationship. There is some indication that the male/female drinking relationships begin in the adolescent years, although it is reported that women drink less than men.[11]

It is well known that adolescent drinking is common among neglected children, and that children with drinking parents often drink with them. It has been estimated that approximately 50% of married couples drink, with 40% of those marriages ending in divorce. The loss (death) of a relative is often an acceptable occasion for adolescent drinking, but it is generally noted that heavy drinking by teenagers occurs at high school weekend parties and that the drinking remains intermittent until the student graduates or drops out of school.

Researchers have also found that there is a great deal of social pressure to drink. This pressure is often applied in the form of joking or teasing. According to Joyce Stevens, who conducted a study on drinking among the Blackfeet for her master's thesis:

> Not to drink with a group is a public indication that one wishes not to be associated with its members which, in turn, is an indication that these individuals are of inferior station, since traditionally one avoided association with one's social inferiors.[12]

A number of researchers have reported strong peer support for substance abuse and have observed strong relationships between peer associations and alcohol involvement. In addition, there is a strong indication that peer groups among American Indian youth not only sanction drinking, but expect it.[13]

Other influences related to drinking among American Indian youth have been suggested. Some researchers have attempted to show the relationship of culture and the use of alcohol and suggest the rationale for drinking among the Sioux is linked to the concept of "power." Among the Sioux, the search for power was a process of self-actualization. Through religious ceremonies, which included fasting, the senses were altered to bring about a vision. It has been suggested that drinking substitutes for the visionary experience; however, most American Indians disregard such theories. Others have related the high incidence of alcohol abuse to instability in the home and family or the exorbitant amounts of free time, which results in substance abuse as a means of coping with boredom among reservation youth.[14]

More than any other minority group in America, Indian adolescents suffer from more substance-related problems, such as unemployment, trouble with the law, increased morbidity and mortality, lack of opportunity, hopelessness, poverty, and dysfunctional families. How these factors contribute to dropping out among American Indian females is discussed in Part II of this book.[15]

## Other Drug Use and Abuse

Most research has shown that Indian youth on the reservations use drugs more frequently than non-Indian youth, particularly marijuana, inhalants, and stimulants; however, reliable research on drug use and abuse among American Indians is not readily available in most cases. A few studies have indicated the seriousness of the problem.[16]

Drug abuse and dependence have been reported to be the fourth most frequent reason for Indian Health Service (IHS) outpatient visits and that those under the age of 39 account for 72% of the visits. Research among military inductees from ages 17 to 22 indicate a higher rate of drug use among Indians when compared to other racial and ethnic groups. After alcohol, marijuana is the next most popular drug among American Indian youth. Although studies indicate that there is a wide inter-tribal variation, between 41% and 62% of American Indian adolescents have tried marijuana as compared to 28% to 50% of other youth.

In a study of marijuana use among American Indian and Caucasian youths, researchers concluded that whereas drug attitude was the best predictor of drug involvement for white adolescents, grade level and peer group patterns were the strongest predictors of the level of Indian youth involvement:

> Certainly the Indian youth is faced with many of the same pressures of adolescent life that confront his or her Caucasian counterpart. But there are more. He or she is a minority group member growing up in a hostile social environment. A growing awareness of the limitations and restrictions that society has placed on him or her — combined with conflicts involving parents, peers and the law about drugs — may result in lowered perceptions of the risks of marijuana smoking. The end product of these processes conceivably is an isolated, frustrated, disoriented individual who might turn to drugs as an escape from both a disintegrating and depressing aboriginal world, and an uncaring and disinterested outside world.[17]

In an IHS survey, 59% of Indian seventh to twelfth graders in 1985 reported marijuana use. Other researchers have observed a lifetime preference for marijuana at twice the level of non-Indians and that marijuana use approaches the level of alcohol in the adult Indian populations.

Inhalant abuse has been identified as a problem in American Indian communities and in BIA boarding schools. Widespread gasoline sniffing among American Indian children has been reported. This problem has most often been identified with younger children to whom other drugs are not available, generally occurring at about the same time as cigarette smoking. American Indian youth reportedly have the highest prevalence rates of usage. It is estimated that 17-22%

of Indian youth use inhalants compared to 9-11% for non-Indians. Between 1983-85, the use of inhalants decreased among Indian youth, although it continued to be more prevalent than in the non-Indian population. Recent research, however, has reported an increase in inhalant abuse.[18]

The prevalence of inhalant abuse is a major concern in that adolescents who begin substance abuse with inhalants are more likely to become involved with more serious drugs than those whose first experimentations were with alcohol or marijuana.[19]

There have been some suggestions that the American Indian culture bears a relationship to the use of drugs among the youth. Most American Indian tribes, like other native cultures, practice rituals of healing which have included drug use; however, these drugs have rigidly prescribed roles in religious and healing ceremonies. Tobacco, for example, was a ceremonial, not a recreational drug in early American Indian traditions. There is no place in the traditional American Indian cultures for the recreational or personal use of drugs, and such explanations for drug use among American Indian youth should be discounted. As noted by Lewayne Gilchrist et al., "High levels of drug and alcohol use are not the result of anything inherent in Indian tradition."[20]

Although culture may in fact contribute to drug and alcohol use, the impact of culture on different groups must be considered carefully. For example, some observers note that "angry Anglo youth" tend to be more deviant and use drugs more frequently. In contrast, studies show that "angry American Indian youth" most often have greater pride and self-esteem and are less likely to use drugs. In fact, it has been found that whereas marijuana use among whites related to liberal attitudes, it was not so for Indian youth.[21]

Likewise, it has also been suggested that American Indian youth take drugs because of the stress created by acculturation in the Anglo society or cultural conflict. However, much research clearly shows that the same factors causing drug abuse among other minority groups in the United States cause high drug use among American Indian youth, including peer pressure, poverty, racism, family problems, and dysfunctional behaviors. For example, it has been found that young Indian youth readily shared their drugs and alcohol since the major reasons for their use of these substances were social ones and peer group acceptance/pressure. These findings are consistent with other racial groups in the U.S.[22]

A number of researchers have noted strong support for drug use among peer groups. It appears that Indian youth are confronted with a dual problem of having many peers who encourage them to use drugs and many others who do not stop them from using drugs. It is generally agreed that peer use, peer attitudes, and peer acceptance are probably the greatest determinants in drug use by Indian youth. Dysfunctional families also appear to be a strong influence in drug abuse among adolescents.[23]

It has been noted that inhalant abuse is most prevalent in isolated communities including Indian reservations, suggesting that drugs are often a solution to boredom for Indian youth.[24]

## Problems with the Law

In 1775, Benjamin Franklin wrote in *Poor Richard's Almanac*: "The savages have a society where there is no force, there are no prisons, no officers to compel obedience or inflict punishment."[25] The lack of crime among the American Indian tribes has often been reported by missionaries and historians, who came into contact with Indians prior to the reservation system. A number of tribes had codes of justice which required that a tribal member must repay for an injury or a wrong caused another tribal member. Stan Steiner noted that the Indian "owed no debt to society" as such. Instead, an indemnity was paid which was thought of as justice to the wronged, not as punishment for the wrongdoer. However, as Steiner noted, this situation has changed since post-reservation days:

> Long ago these laws of the ancients ceased to govern the Indians. The legal codes of the modern tribes are ruled and judged by the rituals and laws of the white men, or by imitations. Economically and politically the needs of the dominant society have been successfully imposed upon the tribes — and the tribal morality has had to accede to these. . . . Laws, in any event, are enforced that require Indians to conform to the necessities of technological life. And they do, at least on the surface.[26]

Research is vague, conflicting, and in many cases nonexistent about American Indian youth and their problems with the law. The majority of arrest rates on or near reservations are the result of excessive drinking or driving a car while intoxicated. Similarly, automobile accident records involving citations and sometimes resulting in death for drivers and passengers are frequently reported as the consequence of alcohol. Domestic fights, or simply "fighting," are among the second highest cause for arrests on the reservations. And although violence in the form of "fighting" or "quarreling" is regularly recorded, even among the youth, violence rarely results in murder, maiming, or serious injury to another individual.

A number of researchers have demonstrated the correlation between dropping out of school and juvenile delinquency. Others have found that failure to graduate from high school is a predictor of adult criminal behavior. Research on American Indians indicates that not only are their arrest rates higher than the population at large, much of the research reveals that the high arrest rates off the reservation are often closely related to discrimination, racial prejudices, or behaviors which may be acceptable within the Native culture but unacceptable to mainstream society.

The Indian arrest rate per 100,000 population is 12 times that of the white race and three times that of the Black race.[27] One writer pointed out appalling facts about American Indians and the prison system, including: (1) one of three Indians will be jailed in their lifetime; (2) every other Indian family will have a relative die in jail; and (3) in areas where Indians live, despite the fact that they may be the minority, they often represent the majority of arrests. One county in Nebraska with an Indian population of 28% but with a county arrest record which was 98% American Indian. The National Clearinghouse on Alcoholism has indicated that almost 100% of all crimes for which an Indian is incarcerated were committed under the influence of alcohol.[28]

## Juvenile Delinquency

*Uniform Crime Reports,* which is published annually, indicates that delinquency rates for American Indians are higher than for the general American population; however, this generalization should be treated with extreme caution as the majority of court appearances for Indian youth are for relatively minor offenses. When comparing juvenile delinquency rates in the nation as a whole, American Indian youth have the lowest rate for serious offenses.

Very little research has been published on juvenile delinquency or crime within the contemporary American Indian culture; however, some researchers have found that delinquency rates are higher when compared to the general population but that offenses committed by Indian youth are misdemeanors or petty offenses. Other studies have found that alcohol played a major role in Indian delinquency; still others related social and economic problems to crime.[29]

Some of the research on American Indian delinquency has been conducted in BIA boarding school settings. An examination of rule violations among three tribal groups of students in a southwestern boarding school found that violations were consistently related to tribal background. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the violations involved the use of alcohol. The authors suggested that their findings supported a tribal cultural deviance interpretation of Indian crime and delinquency rather than family disorganization or failures of socialization. The most frequent categories of offenses for reservation youth were drunkenness and disorderly conduct. Unlike the high rate of auto theft among juveniles in the general population, this category was extremely low on the reservation.[30]

Other studies on boarding school populations have found that delinquent behavior increased with exposure to cultural conflict. For example, in an Alaska Native boarding school, violence and anti-white militancy increased when the Native school was consolidated with a town high school.[31]

Other attempts at explaining the highly inordinate rates of juvenile offenses have been related to alcohol. In fact, the public versus private nature of Indian adolescent drinking "parties," in part, seems to explain the high arrest rate among Indian youth. Others have suggested that the youthfulness of the Indian population contributes to delinquency. Seventy percent (70%) of the American Indian population is below the age of 30, which would account for higher rates of crime relative to other populations, which are older.[32]

Researchers have found that fear of arrest from using drugs is often a deterrent for white youth, but that just the opposite is true in dealing with American Indian youth. American Indian youth are unlikely to accord much respect for drug control laws which they define as the "White man's law." This attitude is a result of lack of full integration by the Indian into the white society. It is often suggested that the high racial visibility off the reservation and close community life serve as primary controls to limit and deter juvenile delinquency, and in reservation communities with increased juvenile delinquency it may be the result of the loss of communal discipline. It is a well-known fact that although the nuclear family members guide children in good behavior, they do not force them, as coercion is alien to Indian familial traditions.[33]

A study on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming compared Anglo and Indian self-reports of delinquency among high school students and found that they did not differ significantly, except that Indian girls ran away from home more frequently than white girls and Indian boys reported more school-centered offenses than white boys. However, Indian youth court appearances were about five times as high as the general U.S. rate, although the Indian youth in the study did not engage in more delinquent acts than the whites. A vast majority of the appearances were for misdemeanors.[34]

### Cultural Differences and Crime

There is some evidence that a cultural phenomenon exists within the Native cultures among Indian youth in their teens to early twenties. This group, which is characterized as "people who like to raise hell" by one researcher, refers to youth who engage in activities that carry a risk of encountering trouble or adversity. These difficulties are not only physical dangers, but also include legal entanglements. This self-identified group did not engage in these activities all of the time, but during their leisure hours they tended to look for "the action" which was found in bars and at drinking parties. They asserted their toughness by possessing qualities for effective fighting, including strength, speed, coordination, and mastery of fighting techniques. The researcher concluded that often what results in trouble with the law for American Indians is acceptable behavior within their culture, but unacceptable to the mainstream culture. This premise is generally accepted by researchers who point out that American Indians are often arrested for alcohol-related behavior that they consider socially and morally acceptable but that the dominant society considers unacceptable and deems illegal. Therefore, it can be concluded that the arrest rates of American Indians indicate intercultural discontinuities as well as other factors.[35]

Vandalism by American Indian youth has been explained by some as a conflict between the white man's obsession with the value of material objects and the Indian's indifference to material things. It has been maintained that material objects have little value to Indians and that parents will watch passively as their children vandalize objects. Others have suggested that the vandalism in school is a "testing of reality" in that the authorities tell the Indians that the school is "theirs," but that American Indian youth doubt the statement and as a result they expose the pretense by engaging in vandalism of the school and school property.[36]

## The Justice System and the American Indian

Administration of justice constitutes an area where Indians have reportedly encountered significant civil rights problems. There have been a number of studies which have involved the administration of justice by law enforcement officers. For example, the South Dakota Advisory Committee (SDAC) of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found evidence of selective law enforcement, harassment, searches without cause, and discourtesy toward Indians by police officers. Further, studies have revealed allegations of abuse of Indian prisoners in jail. There have also been allegations that some towns and cities, where Indians are routinely arrested, use Indian prisoners as cheap labor.

Other practices of the criminal justice system that serve as disadvantages to American Indians have been studied. In the Dakotas, studies showed that Indians are not as likely to become jurors because juries are selected from voter registration lists or licensed drivers lists.[37] Results of studies indicated that lawyers believe the routine exclusion of Indians from juries negatively affects the ability of Indians to receive a fair trial. Studies in border towns near reservations showed disparate patterns in fines and sentencing to the detriment of American Indians. In the state of Washington, for example, arrest rates are reportedly higher among American

Indians than any other racial group and Indians in that state are the least successful group regarding parole situations. It has also been documented that Indians in most states receive longer sentences than whites.[38]

Most crime related activities among American Indians are often attributed to "marginality." Indian males in their 20s or early 30s, who are experiencing problems with social adjustment and tension and drink alcohol, are most likely to be arrested. Discrimination within the justice system is also a major problem. Two researchers studied the types of sentences given to whites and Indians and concluded that the differences in sentencing were related to ethnicity. In other words, an American Indian is more likely to receive a harsher sentence than a white.[39]

Given the research, this writer contacted administrators in state prisons in Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota (three states with large Indian populations and the location of this study) to determine if there was a disparity among Indian and non-Indian prison populations and to identify data on the education level of prisoners. Responses to inquiries varied considerably, from helpfulness to indifference. According to 1988 Wyoming State Penitentiary statistics, American Indians represent 5.3% of the prison population, which is more than twice the Native population (2%) in the state. Of the American Indians imprisoned, 58% had not received a high school diploma. The American Indian population in the South Dakota prison system is approximately 35% of the total prison population, which is more than five times the total Indian population of the state (approximately 6%). No data were available on the educational level of the prisoners; however, over 50% were reported to be involved in a voluntary GED program. The state of Montana reports that information concerning ethnicity of the state's prison population is strictly voluntary and detailed records of the American Indian prison population or their educational levels were unavailable.

There is little data regarding delinquency on the reservation, and what is available is often subject to varied interpretations. Informal discussions with police officers and judges indicate, however, that a high percentage of the American Indian youth do encounter problems with the law, and adults incarcerated in state prisons have more often than not dropped out of high school. When consideration is given to the studies which demonstrate disparity of treatment of Indians by law enforcement officers and the court system, and the cultural acceptance of behaviors considered inappropriate to mainstream society, American Indian youth become even more at-risk.

## Self-Esteem/Self-Identity

Success in school is often highly correlated to self-concept and self-identity. Research generally indicates that American Indian students have lower self-esteem than students from other racial/ethnic groups and that they have more difficulty in establishing ethnic and tribal self-identity and pride in their Indianness.

### Self-Esteem

Poor self-esteem has frequently been attributed to the failure of American Indian children in school. Howard Bahr et al. described the problem of poor self-esteem of American Indian youth: "There is much evidence that Indian students feel despair, disillusionment, alienation, frustration, hopelessness, powerlessness, rejection, and estrangement, all elements of negative views of the self." Other researchers have discovered that Indian youth had far less conviction that they could affect their own environments and futures than other racial groups.[40]

Many of the studies on self-esteem and the American Indian have compared the American Indian child to a white counterpart. This research consistently reports that American Indians have lower scores on conventional tests of self-esteem than whites.[41] Other researchers argue that such differences are misleading because the attributes assessed by the self-esteem tests are important to white students, but not to American Indian children. Some researchers report that dropping out of school results in short-term improvement in self-esteem.[42]

Others have suggested that American Indian children are unable to cope with feelings of inferiority and hopelessness, the result of increasing awareness of cultural and racial differences, and therefore drop out of school before graduation.[43]

Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst concluded in a national study of American Indian youth that the great majority of Indian youth saw themselves as competent individuals within their social world. Their study showed that American Indian youth look to their futures with optimism and hope and that there was no evidence that they suffered from feelings of alienation, frustration, and hopelessness.[44] In another study, a high majority of Indian youth saw themselves as competent individuals within their own social world but demonstrated some self-doubts in the non-Indian world:

> The self-esteem and self-concept data from our study indicates that the great majority of Indian youth see themselves as fairly competent persons within their own social world. This social world is characterized for the majority of these young people by Indianness and by poverty. If they come into contact with expectations by teachers or others from the social world of the urban-industrial and middle-class society, we should expect them to show some self-doubts about their competence, and we should expect their self-esteem score to be lowered.[45]

In a 1970 study on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory was used with American Indian adolescents and it was concluded, when comparing this experimental group with a control group of white adolescents from the same area, that the Oglala Sioux youth consistently revealed feelings of rejection, depression, and paranoia, and that they were more socially, emotionally, and self-alienated than the control group.[46]

Clearly the issue of self-esteem and the American Indian has received considerable study, but few researchers have attempted to identify the differences between males and females. In general, most researchers agree that low achievement in school leads to low self-esteem, which increases the chances of absenteeism, dysfunctional behaviors, and dropping out of school.

Research on American Indian youth tends to indicate that students show a decline in self-concept with increasing age. Some studies indicate that full-blood Indians achieve at lower rates than mixed-blood Indians. One study of Oglala Sioux students found that the greater the degree of Indian blood, the greater the chances that a student would have feelings of depression, alienation, and rejection. Another researcher reported in a study conducted on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota that full-blood Indians, who often look more "Indian" than those of mixed-blood, faced more discrimination at school and in the job market. Thus, some researchers maintain that self-esteem is lower for full-bloods than for mixed-bloods.[47]

Harold Hodgkinson reported that 19% of eighth grade students expect they will drop out of high school. He noted that expectations are self-fulfilling promises, especially among youth. Therefore, such expectations no doubt contribute to dropping out.[48]

## Self-Identity

According to American Indian writer, Darcy McNickle, the treatment of the Indian from the time of the European colonization to the present day has resulted in the loss of Indian ethnic, tribal, and self-identity.[49] Erik Erikson described identity formation in adolescence as dependent upon a youth's ability to integrate identifications from previous experiences with his/her current drive, abilities, and opportunities. He maintained that vital to obtaining a sense of self-identity formation was the assurance that there is consistency between an individual's self-image and the image others have of the individual. According to Erikson, developing a sense of self-identity is so vital to the adolescent that there is no feeling of being alive without it. Therefore, should an adolescent feel that his/her environment deprives him/her of those forms of expression which allow development of a self-identity, the child may resist with the strength and courage of a cornered, wild animal which could result in delinquent or psychotic behaviors.[50]

Other researchers on Indian identity indicate that Indian youth go through a period of identity diffusion and describe the young American Indian as the "marginal man," fitting into neither the white nor Indian culture.[51] One educator observed:

> The cultural impact has taken its toll in obstructing the development of the young Sioux personality. The young Sioux people meet the demands of the dominant culture with a passive resistance. This in itself, however, causes hostility, withdrawal, and a general feeling of rejection. They cannot turn back and are not motivated to go forward. They are truly caught between the cultural stresses of the old world and the new.[52]

George Spindler and Louise Spindler maintained that the Indian personality type, which they referred to as "reaffirmative native," was ambivalent to the white culture. Fred Voget noted that certain Iroquois, whom he called "native modified," were alienated from the dominant culture and that they made no attempt to identify with either the American or Canadian culture.[53]

Assimilation is associated closely with the concept of Indian identity. Assimilation may be divided into three stages: acculturation, social integration, and amalgamation. Acculturation is defined as the process whereby Indians adopt white cultural traits; social integration as increased interaction between Indians and whites; and amalgamation as the biological mixing of the two races, especially through marriage. Total assimilation occurs when an Indian identifies himself/herself as a member of the white society.[54]

Other researchers have noted that Indian youth who seem to succeed are either total traditionalists or totally acculturated:

> There is a failure in psychosocial development of Indian adolescents. That failure is the non-resolution of the identity crisis. Its determinants are the failure to provide an atmosphere of psychohistorical meaningfulness and personal worth in being Indian.[55]

Some researchers report that, in contrast to white children, American Indian children demonstrate more of an emphasis on family ties in self-identity tests, greater emphasis on traditional customs and beliefs, and less emphasis on formal education and on material possessions.[56]

Studies of urban Indian youth and self-identity present some interesting conclusions. In order to resolve their identity crisis, urban Indian youth generally take three directions: polarization of Indian youth toward the white model, polarization of Indian youth toward Indian traditions, or a synthesis of the two models. Many youth resolve identity conflict through the synthesis of the two models, but in order to do this, the Indian youth has to be able to maintain ties with adult Indians and relatives and, at the same time, establish positive relationships with significant white adults and peers.[57]

In a longitudinal study of Oglala Sioux students, Indian adolescents who internalized the social values of white middle class America in terms of school achievement and the "Calvinist work ethic" found this ideological framework inappropriate when applied to themselves and their lives. It was found that Indian students reacted with pessimism to the prospect of work and achievement when confronted with the poverty and dependence on the reservation and the stereotyping of the Indian in the media.[58]

In another study, academically high-achieving Indians were found to be more similar to whites in their value orientation than low-achieving Indians. The study concluded, however, that "Indian" is more valued among Indian youth than "white" is among white youth.[59]

There is some indication that the Civil Rights movement and the Indian activism of the late 60s and the 70s have resulted in a search for Indian identity. Results of these efforts can be seen in curriculum and other techniques throughout schools with Indian enrollments. One researcher suggested that one of the first signs in the search for Indian identity was the return to long hair among young Indian males which "may uniquely be identified as Native American" because of their ancestral heritage. Renewed religious ceremonies, including the Sun Dance among Northern Plains tribes, have also been attributed to the search for Indian identity.[60]

## Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is often cited in the literature as having a negative impact on at-risk students and may in fact contribute to students engaging in a number of dysfunctional behaviors, including dropping out of school.

Some researchers point to peer influences among American Indian tribal groups, which involve a pattern of self-grouping at work, wherein youth with common problems and needs (including those with low self-esteem) congregate together and share mutual experiences. In many cases, these peer groups encourage others within the group to drop out of school.[61]

In a Montana study, over one-third of the American Indian students reported dropping out of school due to a desire to be with other dropouts. Others have suggested that American Indian youth, heavily exposed to negative adult role models, are influenced as well to participate in activities which often lead to drinking or dropping out. Adolescent drinking among the Oglala Sioux has been viewed as a group reinforced behavior. "Older younger" adults make drinks available to school-aged friends and relatives and drinking among urban Sioux adolescents is a social activity rather than a solitary one.[62]

Strong peer group support for drug use has also been found among American Indian youth by a number of researchers. Other researchers have noted that the behaviors and attitudes of young male Indians are tied closely to socialization patterns which are reinforced by peer groups. The "warrior syndrome," which has been discussed in several ethnographic monographs, continues to present day and includes powerful sanctions for American Indian youth.[63]

Rosalie Wax noted, in a study of Oglala Sioux boys, that loyalty of the adolescents was to their peers and not their teachers in school. She reported that students joined in a series of devices: unanimous inattention, inarticulate responses, whispered or pantomime teasing of students called upon by the teacher, and refusal to go to the blackboard. She noted that these activities were a result of need for social approval by peer groups. Others have found that mutual rejection by teachers and students results in strong peer groups that lack adult supervision.[64]

## Mental Health/Suicide

Mental health problems have been a strong interest of those who have researched Indian education. Studies from the mid-30s throughout the 60s sought to dispel the theory that American Indian children were mentally incompetent. In a 1936 report on a mental hygiene survey of eastern Oklahoma Indian children, children who had been previously diagnosed as "mentally defective" were identified as not suffering from antisocial behavior, but rather a lack of opportunity. Other research showed that the overt fears of Dakota Sioux children were no different than rural white children. Most researchers agreed that lack of opportunities, rather than predisposed attitudes and motivations, were responsible for the barriers to social and economic development for Indian children.

Others studied personality disorders among Indian students and reported that mobility of families and the necessity to conform to changing standards led to confusion and disorganization of the child's personality.

Some researchers have suggested that American Indian children perform lower academically than whites because they suffer higher emotional disturbances; that is, poor school performance may be an effect rather than a cause of mental disorder. Other researchers found that low-achieving students exhibited low self-esteem and anomie and one report stated that 75% of the children in an Alaskan boarding school had emotional problems.[65]

Such studies suggest that American Indian children, when they enter school, are exposed to cultural discrepancies. Under such conditions they are either labeled as shy and non-competitive by the majority culture, or they are considered rebellious, destructive, and aggressive.

The amount of research on suicide and the American Indian illustrates the magnitude of the problem. Official statistics on suicide rates among American Indian youth, however, are conflicting and in many cases inaccurate. Estimates have been made setting the rate at two to seven times as high as in the majority of society, and yet it is important to note that the suicide rate varies from tribe to tribe. Most researchers reported that approximately one in every 200 Indian youth attempted suicide and that the suicide rate is four times as high for Indians as for non-Indians.

Unlike mainstream society where the risk of suicide increases with age, Indian suicide is mostly confined to younger people, with the vast majority occurring between the ages of 15 and 39 but peaking at age 20. Researchers have also noted different patterns of suicide: females commit or attempt suicide by ingesting drugs and toxins, often as a result of an argument with a significant other. On the other hand, Indian females commit suicide at about half the rate as other American women. Several researchers have attributed familial disorganization as a major contributor to suicide among young Indian males. Others have also noted that more than one caretaker before the age of 15, arrests, losses by divorce or desertion, and attending a boarding school at an early age were all factors in suicide among young males.[66] One major study on adolescent suicide concluded:

> The data presented clearly indicate statistically significant differences between individuals who commit suicide and the control group. The subjects in the suicide group were cared for by more than one individual

> during their developing years, while control subjects were almost always cared for by a single individual. The primary caretakers of the suicide group had significantly more arrests during the time they were caretakers of the subjects. The suicide group also experienced many more losses by desertion or divorce than the control group. The individuals who suicided were arrested more times in the years prior to their suicide than were the controls. . . . Many of the completed suicides were sent off to boarding school at a significantly earlier age . . . and they were also sent more frequently to boarding schools. . . . All of the data point to a chaotic and unstable childhood.[67]

A high percentage of suicide attempts occur in conjunction with alcohol or following crimes against friends or relatives and other misfortunes as a result of drinking.[68]

Cultural conflict and social disorganization has also been linked with suicide. Suicide and suicide attempts among Indian youth are often precipitated by domestic quarrels and marital strife within one's family. Some discredit the idea that the suicide rate is directly related to the kind of schooling that American Indian children received and suggest that the suicides rates are closely correlated with disorganized family life, alcoholism, and loss of friends or relatives by death. There is some evidence that the destruction of self-esteem has led to suicide as well as alcoholism and homicide.[69]

"Cluster suicides" (one suicide triggers other suicides) are reported to be higher among American Indian youth. Alcohol seems to be one major cause; yet suicide rates are lower today than during the peak years of 1970-77.

Despite the plethora of research on suicide and the American Indian, suicide remains a major concern of educators working with Indian youth. Although research exists, progress in preventive techniques and strategies is often questionable. Five years ago, this writer worked with an American Indian school district where 23 suicides had been attempted; three were successful. The suicide victims were eighth and ninth graders. More recently, this writer was on an Indian reservation where two teenage boys had committed suicide. In response to a request from a parent, this writer met with her son, a friend of the deceased teenagers. During our conversation, the young man revealed that he regarded his friends who committed suicide as courageous. "They are my heroes," he said.

## Pregnancy

Unlike other ethnic groups in the U.S., little data exist on the percentage of American Indian girls who leave school due to premature pregnancy. Most needs assessments conducted by school districts on Indian reservations speak to the need for sex education and alternative educational programs for teenage mothers. Many American Indian schools offer alternative programs for the pregnant teen, including home-schooling programs, child care programs, and some have even experimented with nursery school programs for the children of teenage mothers. National statistics report that 40% of the girls who drop out of school do so due to pregnancy, and there is no reason to suspect that the American Indian female statistics would be different. In fact, there have been reports that would indicate teen pregnancy is higher among American Indian females. One school district in Montana reported that 16 of the 23 female students in the eleventh and twelfth grades were pregnant. One small South Dakota reservation community (150 population) reported that 27 females between the ages of 14 and 20 were pregnant. In addition, there are many reports of girls who have two and three children before the age of 19, which is consistent with national data. Organizations such as the Children's Defense Fund and the Center for Population Options, who have developed programs for teenage mothers, view teen pregnancy as the result of the lack of sufficient options. In the case of the American Indian girl, the lack of a promising future may, in fact, contribute to the high rate of pregnancy.

Bea Medicine, a Dakota Sioux anthropologist, cited an example of cultural socialization pressure among Sioux males and females that may contribute to teen pregnancy. According to her, Sioux females are not fully recognized as mature women until they have produced a son, and males feel inadequate until they have fathered a son. Medicine pointed out:

> Giving birth to a child is somehow equated with adulthood . . . this status is extended to the increasing numbers of 13 and 14-year old girls who produce illegitimate children. The Dakota phrase 'towa cinea tayesni' (literally, 'whose child no one knows') which was a tremendous mark of shame several generations ago, does not have great significance in present day systems of social control.[70]

Of primary concern to American Indian educators are statistics that speak to the number of fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and fetal alcohol effects (FAE) children being born on the reservations. There is a wide range in the incidence of FAS among tribes, from 1.3 per 1,000 live births among the Navajo to 10.3 among the Plains tribes, many of which are located in South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.[71]

Michael Dorris, in his recent best seller, *The Broken Cord*, reported that on some Indian reservations, Indian social workers maintain that one-fourth to one-third of Indian children are affected by fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) or other fetal alcohol effects (FAE).[72]

Although research is almost nonexistent on pregnancy and its impact on dropping out among American Indian females, there is no question that premature pregnancy is the cause of a high percentage of girls leaving school early. The severity of the problem for American Indian girls and its implications for their futures and the futures of their children has not been researched.

## CORRELATE TWO:
### FAMILY BACKGROUND AND DROPPING OUT

Various factors within the family background have often been discussed in terms of American Indian students' failure in school. Research indicates a high correlation between dropping out and socioeconomic status of the family. Other researchers have suggested that one-parent families, dysfunctional families, child abuse, and child-rearing practices have high correlations to school failure. This section will discuss each of those factors and their relationship to the American Indian student.

### Socioeconomic Status

American Indians are the most poverty-stricken ethnic group in the nation according to the 1990 U.S. census figures. In fact, the statistics indicate a growing trend of economic inequality among minorities over the past decade. More than half of Indian households earn less than $20,000 annually and Indian children are three times more likely to live in poverty than white children. In addition, the census figures show that Indians have the highest unemployment rate in the country.[73]

It is currently reported that 38% of Indian children live below the poverty line. Throughout the literature, many researchers noted the poverty conditions of the Indian child.[74] Other researchers have reported that Indian students come to school poorly clothed and malnourished. Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst noted that the majority of Indian students are reared in poverty-stricken families and that poverty is a disadvantage to school achievement.[75] A 10-year study of Indian students in California reported that not only were there high dropout and truancy rates, but there was a high incidence of health problems, much of which was attributed to crowded living conditions and isolation.[76] Several studies have indicated that the government-supported hot lunch programs increased school attendance among Indian students because of inadequate food in the home environment. Others have found that low levels of achievement are associated with low economic and social levels.[77]

The economic conditions of reservation life are very precarious. Unemployment among American Indians in 1980 was listed at 65% in Wyoming and 64% in South Dakota, as compared to 7% and 6%, respectively, for whites. On one reservation where this study was conducted, 85% of the jobs were held by females. Among the Northern Plains tribes, male employment often falls into the category of ranching, farming, arts, and crafts. Women are more likely to work in clerical, educational, and social service areas.[78]

A BIA study of 635,000 American Indians living on or near reservations in 1989 showed that one-third were unemployed and over one-third of those who were employed earned less than $7,000 per year.[79]

It is evident that more American Indian children are growing up in poverty than any other racial/ethnic group in America. Unemployment plagues tribal groups throughout the country. That poverty and dropping out of school are regarded as highly correlated to socioeconomic status is a matter of concern in Indian country. Children who are labeled as coming from "disadvantaged" homes due to poverty may have one strike against them before they begin school.

## Parents' Educational Level

Some researchers have attributed the low educational levels of the American Indian adult population to the poverty levels. Again, reports varied from tribe to tribe; however, available statistics indicate that the high school graduation level of adult Indian populations on some reservations is as low as 27%, compared to the national average for non-Indians of 86%. A study conducted in 1981 of 4,000 American Indian adults revealed literacy scores, as measured by the Adult Performance Inventory (API), lower than any other ethnic or racial group excluding recent immigrants.[80] Scores of American Indian participants were comparable to those from underdeveloped nations. It was also reported that 59% of the adult Indian population had neither a high school diploma nor a GED. Of adults over the age of 25, 16% have less than five years of schooling.[81]

Researchers repeatedly show the correlation between socioeconomic status of families and students dropping out of school. Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst reported that school achievement and socioeconomic status of the family proved to be more influential than school characteristics, except in the cases where the family cannot provide much help to the student because of lack of education. Specifically, they were addressing the issues of poverty and illiteracy on the part of the parents as contributing to an environment nonconducive to learning, such as the absence of books and reading materials in the home and a quiet place to study. In such cases, they maintained that the school may actually compensate to some extent, maintaining that many Indian parents have little formal education, resulting in their children becoming more dependent upon the school for academic instruction than children from families where parents can assist them with their education.[82]

Whether or not the educational level of parents is a major factor to dropping out has not been fully researched.

## Child-Rearing Practices

Child-rearing practices of Native tribal groups are noted throughout the literature as one of the major conflicts between home and success in school. In

1634, a Jesuit priest, Father le Jeune, described the frustration of disciplining Indian children in his missionary school:

> . . . these Barbarians cannot bear to have their children punished, not even scolded, not being able to refuse anything to a crying child. They carry this to such an extent that upon the slightest pretext they would take them away from us, before they were educated.[83]

Researchers have noted that although the political and economic structures of the American Indian culture have largely been destroyed, child-rearing practices and personal relationships have undergone a slower transformation. Such practices which are characterized by permissiveness and indulgence with little stress on noncompetitive behavior are at odds with the school setting.[84]

Other researchers have discussed child-rearing practices of Indians:

> Children are punished relatively seldom by parents. Instead, they are warned, when they are naughty, that people will talk about them. Or they are warned of punishment by supernatural beings. . . . Thus much of the children's experience of punishment comes from outside the home and comes from persons whom they do not love.[85]

Bernard Spilka maintained that child-rearing practices of American Indians tend to foster failure in schools for Indian children, including three particular problems: (1) a preschool environment at home that does not include or display the early educational teaching by parents, common in white middle-class homes; (2) materials in school that are alien to Indian children; and (3) teacher/child relationships which are quite different than those experienced outside of school. He suggested that this discrepancy between home and school resulted in the feeling of alienation and negative attitude toward school.[86]

Other researchers have found that Indian children are taught self-control by their parents, that parental focus allows children to learn for themselves, and that physical punishment is rare. They have also observed that authority figures are distributed among many people in the family and that individual autonomy and collective group responsibility encourage control over oneself and not over others. As such, Indian children are most often disciplined as a group rather than individually.[87]

Some researchers maintain that culturally-different children often come to school where there is a different expectation of behavior than was established in their home. Thus, children act in ways that are judged as appropriate at home, but in school, discover that their behavior is inappropriate.[88] For example, interruption of parents and other adults by the Indian child is not considered misbehavior, but in school the teacher labels such behavior as inappropriate. One study of American Indian children in school and in community life, identified nonacceptance of "student talk" by teachers in early grades as a determinant of failure for Indian students. The researcher noted that because different standards were experienced in the home and the school, students began very early exhibiting "learning difficulties and feelings of inferiority." This phenomenon was attributed to child-rearing practices.[89]

Some researchers have suggested that parents are perceived to be the strongest influence on a student's school work. One study of Cree families reported that educational success for children was important, but that the Cree culture and heritage was equally important. Others reported that Indian parents internalized feelings of inferiority that affected their children's academic performance. On the other hand, others found little difference between parental behavior and student attitudes about education in Indian and non-Indian students.[90]

Dick Little Bear, a Northern Cheyenne educator, maintains that the exclusion of Indian parents from the education of their children by federal government policies has not worked and has created a mistrust for education:

> Indian parents were systematically excluded from participation in the education of Indian youth. Excluding Indian parents . . . has made Indian parents very suspicious of modern American education. . . . This misuse of education produced education-hating Indians. Schools are still associated with punishment and deprivation. . . .[91]

Other researchers have noted that behavior which the non-Indian culture often regards as "apathy" is actually a traditional reluctance on the part of parents to interfere in the affairs of others, including their own children. Permissiveness on the part of Indian parents has been the subject of a number of studies.[92] On the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, one researcher found that Arapaho parents thought their children should make up their own minds about whether they should go to college, while another concluded that the permissive attitude in the Shoshone home was a detriment to academic achievement.[93]

Some researchers note that child-rearing practices indirectly encourage substance abuse among American Indian youth and target the laissez-faire child-rearing practices, which were long-established Siouan cultural edicts, as fostering parental tolerance of substance abuse.[94] Others note that Indian children often go unsupervised for long periods of time, thus escaping effective controls in the home. Faced with controls in the school, American Indian children often react by disobeying at first, skipping school, and finally dropping out.

In a study of Blackfeet children, obedience to elders is demanded, but otherwise the child has a wide range of personal choices and autonomy. Efforts at controlling the child take the form of lectures rather than physical force or threats.[95]

The research is relatively clear that traditional child-rearing practices, which have survived at a time when other aspects of the culture have diminished or changed, impact the American Indian child's life tremendously. Furthermore, research supports that acceptable behaviors within the home are often unacceptable in the school, thus creating a feeling of disorientation in young children, and may result in dropping out in later years.

## Single-Parent Families

It has been reported in various demographic studies conducted on American Indian tribes that anywhere from 24% to 50% of American Indian youth are growing up in homes with only one parent. In a report based on 1980 census data, it was found that 25% of American Indian children were growing up in single-parent homes as compared to less than one-fifth of children in the population as a whole. These data, which are often falsely reported or not reported at all, refer to the absence of a husband, spouse, or father of the child in the home.[96] It is important to note, however, that in a high percentage of American Indian homes, the child is not growing up in an environment that is devoid of other adults. Due to family relationships and the extended family structure of American Indian tribal groups, a high percentage of students grow up in homes where other relatives or friends are living in the household.

Again, data are inconclusive about the number of American Indian children who are growing up in one-parent households. National statistics report that one in every four children in this country are born to single mothers. There is no reason to believe that this statistic is any lower for American Indian children. The difference, however, does occur in the fact that American Indian children may not be growing up in a family with one adult because of the tendency of American Indian households to include a number of friends and relatives living in the home.

### Dysfunctional Families

The institution of the American Indian family has been drastically altered over the years. Many children suffer from unpredictable home environments which include loss in their family through divorce, separation or desertion, arrest of parents, domestic quarrels, other marital strife, and alcohol abuse. In a study of one Indian group in which rapid change and breakdown in extended nuclear families had occurred, there was a high suicide rate among the youth.[97]

Some researchers have observed that the traditional community and family structures are decreasing among American Indians. Others have noted that among some tribes the continued involvement of the men in sharing alcoholic beverages and their participation in peer groups beyond adolescence has proven counterproductive to the family and marriage and leads to marital discord among American Indians.[98]

Although child abuse and neglect among Native populations has received considerable attention in the last decade among social service workers and health care providers,[99] little research exists on the subject. Part of the problem is created by inaccurate reporting, lack of community cooperation, and inconsistent definitions of child abuse and neglect.[100] Within American Indian communities, these problems are further complicated by cultural variations.[101] One educator suggests that child abuse and neglect among American Indian populations is often defined in a cross-cultural context whereby "such behavior is somehow made understandable and, hence, acceptable."[102]

Studies on child abuse and neglect reveal a number of findings. In a small Alaskan village, one study reported that nearly all children in the community were neglected, and attributed the neglect to the absence of the traditional child-caring practices that had disappeared.[103] Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the referrals to Indian child welfare programs are reportedly due to physical abuse, neglect, and abandonment.[104]

There appears to be a wide variation in the incidences of child abuse and neglect among tribes. Approximately 50% of the child abuse cases and 80% of the child neglect cases are related to alcohol abuse. In a study among the Cheyenne River Sioux, sexual abuse was found to be less frequent than the national average, but physical abuse was more serious and often resulted in the death of a child. Others have reported that neglect occurs more frequently among American Indians than any other group in America.[105]

One researcher reported, in a study among the Blackfeet, that babies and young children are given small amounts of alcohol when the adults are drinking.[106] Phyllis Old Dog Cross reported that the amount of violence against women, alcoholism, abuse and neglect by women against their children and aged relatives has increased in the American Indian community.[107] In a study of families of neglected Navajo children, researchers found that the families had a significantly higher percentage of single, widowed, or divorced mothers than a non-neglected control group.[108] Other researchers[109] pointed to the deterioration of the family, which was once the cornerstone of Indian society, as one of the problems facing American Indian youth today.

Child abuse and neglect is often concentrated in dysfunctional families, often characterized by multiple problems, including suicide, homicide, desertion, alcohol, educational problems, and health problems.[110] Alcohol abuse is related to almost every deviant behavior among American Indians.[111] A study of abuse and neglect cases at a Southwest Indian health hospital which served 12 reservations, reported that alcohol abuse was present in 85% of the neglect cases and 63% of the abuse cases. In 65% of the cases, child abuse and neglect occurred simultaneously. The study also showed that children were likely to be abused by more than one person in the family, that girls were more likely to be abused than boys, and that 30% of the abused/neglected children had a history of disability or handicap.[112]

The research on American Indian students consistently reports that home environment has a major impact on the success of students in school. The research is also clear that children who abuse alcohol and drugs, children who commit suicide, and children who drop out of school often come from homes where the parent is absent or the parent has little or no control.

## CORRELATE THREE:
## SCHOOL FACTORS

A number of factors relating to school have been studied by researchers in an attempt to identify the reasons for lack of success and/or success of Indian students. Until the 1980s, the majority of this research focused on the deficit model; that is, the behaviors, characteristics, and cultural differences that the child brought with him/her to school were the accepted explanations for poor academic achievement, absenteeism, and dropping out. This research will be reviewed in that it has a major bearing, even today, on the way schools deal with children. At the same time, this writer will review current literature which seeks to identify the school's role in students dropping out of school.

This section will address the factors related to school which include: bilingualism/limited English proficiency; cultural differences/cultural discontinuity; academic achievement/failure including grade retention, course failure, and tracking; attendance including truancy, absenteeism, detention, and expulsion; teacher attitudes and expectations; and racism, discrimination, and prejudice.

### Bilingualism

In 1899, a well-known magazine editor wrote that the American Indian should learn English as a protection against the white man:

> It is well that [the Indian] should learn to read and write, and get what comprehension he can of this nation's laws and genius, and acquire our language — all of these things being valuable to him chiefly as some protection against being robbed by our rascals.[113]

From the beginning, the European settlers, and later the U.S. government, have attempted to bring the Indian into the mainstream of America through education. In the 1880s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs issued orders that the English language was to be the language of instruction:

> The main purpose of educating them is to enable them to read, write, and speak the English language and to transact business with English-speaking people. . . . Every nation is jealous of its own language, and no nation ought to be more so than ours, which approaches nearer than any other nationality to the perfect protection of its people. True Americans all feel that the Constitution, laws, and institutions of the United States, in their adaptation to the wants and requirements of man, are superior to those of any other country. . . . Nothing so surely and perfectly stamps upon an individual a national characteristic as language.[114]

Thus the decision to obliterate Indian languages and to replace them with English was approached as a nationalizing purpose. Government officials and educators rejected the notion of coexistence of English and the Indian languages as compatible with nationhood. Furthermore, it was suggested that the use of English among American Indians would create patriotism and loyalty and somehow facilitate national integration. Obviously the assault on the Indian languages and culture has produced over the years a legacy of bitterness and hatred among Indian tribes. Government policies which imposed alien standards on Indians and forced separation of parents and children induced both hostility and subtle resistance. Force had to be used to keep students in school as illustrated in the following report:

> I have at all times assisted the Superintendent in keeping the school filled up with pupils, and sometimes have had to send the police over the reservation to gather up the scholars; also have had to frequently send the police after the larger boys, who would run away from the schools. . . .[115]

Accounts of the unjust treatment of Indian students can be found throughout the literature, but the ban on the use of the Native languages appears almost ludicrous at times:

> The schools the children were forced to attend were strict and authoritarian beyond what anyone not incarcerated would put up with today. They were also, although perhaps not intentionally, cruel. Children were rarely allowed to go home to visit their families; moreover, upon arrival at the boarding schools, they were forbidden to speak their native languages and were required to remain silent until they could speak English. That one

> could learn to speak by remaining silent is a pedagogical triumph not readily encountered.[116]

The policy of the government toward Indian languages was not without its critics, and the BIA often found itself in the position of defending its strategies from the growing number of complaints against the English-only rule. In response to such criticism, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Atkins stated:

> To teach Indian school children their native tongue is practically to exclude English, and to prevent them from acquiring it. This language, which is good enough for a white man and a black man, ought to be good enough for a red man. . . . Is it cruelty to the Indian to force him to give up his scalping knife and tomahawk? Is it cruelty to force him to abandon the vicious and barbarous sun dance, where he lacerates his flesh and dances and tortures himself even unto death?[117]

The Native languages continued to be banned from BIA schools until the 1930s and 1940s, when some action was taken to provide the use of the language as well as instruction in the language to Indian students:

> It has not been many years since the use of the native language was forcibly discouraged in government schools, and native dialects were often held up to ridicule. . . . Under the present administration the native languages have come to be recognized, not as encumbrances and impediments to the progress of the native peoples, but as definite tools to be fitted into the educational program.[118]

This strategy was shortlived, however, and was discontinued with the advent of World War II.

It was not until the 1960s that bilingual education became an issue with Indian children. Testimony before the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Education concerning the Bilingual Education Act pointed out:

> When you come to the Indian child, given what seems to be the fact that he cherishes his Indian status to a remarkable extent, and given the fact that his cultural patterns are markedly different from those of the dominant American group, he is not simply cheated out of a language that does not matter internationally anyway, he is not just damaged in school: he is almost destroyed. As a matter of fact, historically, that is what we tried to do with them: destroy them. All you have to do is read the accounts to know that.[119]

In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act, which was Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was passed. This act was a compensatory education program for "disadvantaged" non-English speaking students. In 1974, the low-income provision was removed, and in 1978, the act was amended to include funding for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Indian children and the participation of up to 40% of monolingual English speakers so that the programs did not segregate students. The act was amended in 1984 to fund maintenance and transitional programs, which emphasized the development of English language skills in non-English speaking students.

Even today, many Indian children begin school with little or no skills in the use of the English language. The Human and Civil Rights Committee of the National Education Association (1983) reported that 25% of American Indian children begin school unable to speak English. Although the majority of Indian children in the country may speak English, and often only English, it is important to note that it is usually a substandard English, which is not the English of the classroom and of textbooks. Judgments about lack of intelligence are made about people who do not use standard English, such as:

> A child who uses correct language is presumably neat, polite, well groomed and a paragon of virtue, whereas a child who uses incorrect language probably falls asleep in church, plays hooky from school, dissects cats and takes dope.[120]

The language handicap for Indian students appears to increase as they move through school. The loss of the Native languages is one of the most critical issues confronting tribes and has been attributed to a breakdown in communication between children and their grandparents and the subsequent loss of heritage.[121]

Some researchers report that Indian students in South Dakota who speak their Native language are not as high achievers in school as those students who are English-only speakers. Others have tested the linguistic maturity of Indian students and found lower patterns of development than those of white children.[122] On the other hand, in a study of Canadian Indians and Metis, inadequate exposure to English instead of the use of their Native languages was found to be at the root of language problems.[123]

It has been noted that often Indian children make satisfactory progress in school until they reach the fourth grade. The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the fact that the textbooks in the first three grades are written in "talking" or conversational vocabulary, while upper-grade texts shift to a "comprehension" vocabulary.[124]

L. Madison Coombs reported on a study of 14,000 Indian students and concluded:

> Investigation of the data reveals an amazingly consistent relationship between the degree of Indian blood and pre-school language on the one hand and level of achievement on the other. With only one exception, the smaller the amount of Indian blood in a group and the greater the amount of English spoken prior to school entrance, the higher the group achieved.[125]

Even on reservations where English, and English only, is the language, there are still the problems of low achievement, high dropout rates, and absenteeism. It may be that the language problem is a symptom rather than the cause of scholastic failure. A number of schools have incorporated the use of the Native language into the curriculum. Probably the most famous is the Rock Point Community School on the Navajo reservation. Graduates of this school test out on English language standardized achievement tests as superior to Indian students who have not had bilingual education.[126] In Chicago's bilingual-bicultural Little Big Horn High School, dropout rates were reduced from 95% for American Indian students to 11%.[127] Many researchers maintain that students do better in school if their language and culture are a part of the school's curriculum.[128]

Bilingual education is controversial on many reservations. Often tribal members and teachers join forces in preventing the use of Native languages in the classroom, and yet there is reportedly no tribe that has used the Native language as a substitute for the English language nor have they let the Native language restoration outrank the importance of teaching English.[129]

Over the years, language has played an important role in success in school. Most linguists agree that the truly bilingual child (fluent in two languages) has higher achievement in school than children who speak or understand two languages at varying degrees. American Indian children who often understand, but do not speak, the Native language and often enter school using substandard English, present a different situation for teachers that clearly warrants further research.

## Cultural Differences/Cultural Discontinuity

Most researchers agree that Indian children are affected by both the white and Indian cultures. Some scholars maintain that Indian children are often torn between two cultures. Others point out that some students accept one culture and reject the other, whereas many maintain that Indian students attempt, often unsuccessfully, to participate in both cultures, but since they are so very different and contradictory, they must develop the skills to compartmentalize their behaviors dependent upon the society in which they are functioning. This individual is often referred to as bicultural.

Erik Erikson noted in his observations of Sioux children that the traditional enculturation process must be recognized so that the transition to school may be based on the Indian child's childhood.[130] A number of studies have discussed the consequences of formal education and the cultural conflict arising from the child being educated in a traditional society and the school setting.[131]

Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst cited family background as being a handicap to school achievement for Indian students. In their national study, they were not only speaking to a family background with low economic status and low educational levels of the parents, but they were also addressing the degree to which American Indian parents continued cultural and Native language practices in the home. They maintained that family background influences success for Indian students in that the Indian culture is often discontinuous with the demands of schooling. They included such characteristics in the Native culture that are in conflict with the urban-industrial culture: close family solidarity, support for relatives, belief in the values of a tribal tradition, belief in tribal religion, and a tribal language. These values, they pointed out, are sometimes in conflict with the competitive and individualistic achievement demanded in schools.[132]

Others have maintained that there are considerable differences between the Indian culture and the white culture which have resulted in conflict for the Indian child: namely, to stay with the traditions and accept the old ways or to give up their values and suffer hostility from friends and family and join the white society which does not welcome them. For example, in the Indian culture there is very little consideration of the future. Children grow up in an environment where the adults live for the here and now. This strongly affects success in school and vocational choices. Furthermore, adolescents growing up on a reservation find that their culture and way of life can only be lived on the reservation, which for many of them means subsistence on welfare with few material comforts. If they leave the reservation, they find that any departure from the traditional way of life, such as refusing to share one's paycheck, will result in hostility from relatives and friends.[133]

The traditional cultural values allow for an enormous amount of independence for Indian youth. Many observers maintain that somewhere between the ages of 8 and 10, Indian youth begin making decisions about where they will go to school, who they will live with, and when they will eat. It is not uncommon for parents to know nothing of the whereabouts of their children, although the absence of parenting is a more recent occurrence in the culture. As a result of lack of parental guidance, the decisions made by young Indians tend to be based on the need for immediate gratification.[134]

Rosalie Wax reported that alcohol abuse among Indian students was embedded in a broad social milieu within the culture. She maintained that self-determination which promotes individual autonomy fosters parental tolerance of adolescent substance abuse. She further noted that even though adults may personally disapprove of drinking, it is assumed that the individual must take care of him/herself, and therefore adults do not intervene in adolescent drinking.[135] In general, there is a social acceptance of drinking as a shared recreational activity, which serves as a means for self-expression and assertion of ethnic identity.[136] It has been reported that the Indian is allowed to do almost anything when drinking, as the drinker knows the alcohol, and not the drinker, will be blamed for the behavior. This behavior serves to advertise to non-Indians that the drinker can still "act Indian" in a way that the majority society cannot influence.[137]

Other researchers cited cultural conflict as an explanation for Indian students' failure in school.[138] They suggested that Indian youth do poorly in school because the educational system historically has served as a battleground in the confrontation between the Indian and white worlds. Since schools are typically the purveyors of white values and Indian ones are excluded, Indian students, who are raised with more traditional values, tend to drop out. A study of the effects of acculturation on intergroup competition and cooperation among Indian and non-Indian children found that Indian children who attend an integrated school become more competitive and that non-Indians in an integrated school become more cooperative.[139]

Others have addressed social disorganization as a serious problem for American Indian youth. They noted that Western culture has led to rapid social change and the breakdown in traditional sociocultural systems, which has resulted in a rapidly changing, disorganized system where the values and roles are unclear. This situation, according to many researchers, has created an environment which is predisposed toward self-destruction. As such, cultural conflict is a source of stress for Indian youth in the schools. The pressure is both overt and covert. In the school and media there is pressure to acculturate and become "more like everyone else in America," but at the same time there is pressure from within the culture to "remain an Indian."[140] This results in a situation wherein the Indian is caught between two different existences and is marginal in each.

Brewton Berry contended:

> There are some who maintain that the Indian today possesses a civilization of great antiquity, to which he is deeply attached, and which he is determined to perpetuate. He has succeeded thus far. . . . The school, the Indian rightly suspects, is a device for hastening his assimilation, and he resists it as best he can by withdrawal, indifference, and non-cooperation. . . . At the other extreme there are those, including some Indians, who conclude that the old cultures have been shattered and can never be revived.[141]

A considerable amount of research[142] has reported that mid-adolescence is the age when young people become exposed to the stress of cultural conflict. Joseph Trimble et al. observed, "Indians persist both as heterogeneous culture groups and as a separate segment of American society."[143] As a result, Indian youth demonstrate a lack of integration into either the traditional Indian or modern-day American life. Other research illustrates, however, that cultural conflict does *NOT* inevitably result in passivity or aggression. Although living in both cultures may create risk, it can also create opportunity. The individual who masters this situation can move between cultures and incorporate elements of both.[144]

A number of researchers have sought to explain the reasons for the American Indian child's problems with school as cultural conflict. One researcher summed up his findings somewhat succinctly by referring to the Indian student as the "marginal man." In defining the marginal man, he explained that this was "a person who participates in two different cultures without being totally committed to, or accepted by, either."[145]

Much of the literature on the American Indian dropout treats the significance of cultural discontinuity between school and home as an explanation for the high dropout rate. In response to this explanation, many scholars have suggested that "culturally relevant" curriculum will alleviate the high dropout problem.

The cultural discontinuity hypothesis is predicated on the assumption that culturally based differences within the Indian students' homes and the Anglo culture of the school leads to conflicts and ultimately failure and dropping out by students.[146]

John Ogbu, an anthropological theorist, is very critical of the cultural discontinuity theory as an explanation for minority student failure in schools.[147] He notes that although the theory sounds quite plausible, since cultural differences have implications for human behavior, anthropologists are making such suggestions prior to any serious ethnographic research in the schools. Perhaps his strongest criticism of the cultural discontinuity theory is its failure to explain the success of immigrant minority children in American schools, who experience cultural discontinuity between home and school at least as severely as the experiences of American Indians and Blacks.

Although little research explicitly supports the cultural discontinuity theory, there is a plethora of research that posits cultural conflict, cultural differences, and cultural discontinuity as the explanation for failure and makes assumptions about the need for cultural relevance in curriculum. In a Milwaukee study of urban Indian dropouts, one researcher applied the cultural discontinuity theory and stated:

> Considering the disproportionately high Native American dropout rate, one can reasonably assume that certain culturally-based Indian characteristics exist that clash with the urban public school environment.[148]

Many scholars assume that cultural discontinuity between the Indian culture and the school culture causes academic failure, and thus creates a dissonance within the student resulting in dropping out. Several researchers have conducted interviews with students specifically about the importance of cultural relevance in the schools. One Montana study reported that high school dropouts cited the lack of relevance of the school curriculum both in terms of future employment and the Indian culture as a reason that significantly influenced their decision to leave school.[149] Another study of urban American Indian students found that both parents and students felt the schools to be "culturally insensitive."[150] Other researchers have related students' participation in traditional culture to their failure in school.[151] Despite the plethora of research available on cultural conflict and cultural discontinuity, cultural relevance is rarely defined in the literature, and if it is, the definitions are as varied as the tribal groups represented. Yet lack of a culturally relevant curriculum is frequently suggested to be a major factor to dropping out among American Indian youth.

When explaining cultural differences as a major contributor in dropping out, it is important to look at research claiming that being bilingual and being traditional are assets for American Indian students. Some researchers have found that a student's first language (Native language) is not a determinant to success in school. In fact, it has been found that students who are bilingual are less likely to drop out of school.

Of particular importance, however, is that students from less traditional homes drop out at higher rates. In a study of urban American Indian adolescents in Phoenix, Arizona, the majority of dropouts reported positive attitudes toward school, although it was noted that some dropouts felt pushed out of school by academic and discipline problems. Although this group blamed factors within the school as contributing to their dropping out, the majority regretted their decision to leave.[152]

In a study of Navajo and Ute school leavers, Donna Deyhle found that Navajo students who came from traditional homes, spoke their Native language, and participated in traditional religious activities did not feel that the school curriculum was inappropriate for Indians. On the other hand, she found that Ute students who came from less traditional homes felt the school curriculum was not relevant to Indian students. Again, the latter group experienced the highest dropout rates.

Deyhle commented, "A culturally non-responsive curriculum is a greater threat to those whose own cultural 'identity' is insecure."[153]

Although culture may be a significant factor in whether a student succeeds or fails in school, it may be that the student's cultural background and not the school curriculum is more significant. There is some evidence that a strong sense of cultural identity provides a student with a significant advantage in school.[154] This idea, which contradicts the theory that the more "white" or "acculturated" a student is, the more advantaged he/she may be in the school setting, is an extremely important issue in Indian education. It may be that the more traditional students, who have a strong self-identity and tribal-identity, do better in school and that the students who are less traditional are more likely to resist school and to see less relevance in the curriculum. This may be a far more significant factor when examining the factors for success and failure in school.

## Academic Achievement/Failure Including Grade Retention and Tracking

Research on academic achievement is varied in nature. Early researchers often attributed low achievement among American Indian students to inferior mental abilities. Some maintained that test bias was a contributing factor, whereas others have seen a direct correlation between socioeconomic status and achievement.

Early studies on the intellectual abilities of American Indians tended to report inferior native ability. A number of early researchers supported a cultural difference theory to explain American Indian intelligence and concluded that American Indian children were mentally inferior.[155] Since 1935, however, most researchers have supported the theory that American Indian children are as mentally competent as other racial groups.[156]

However, research on American Indian students reveals a negative correlation between years spent in school and academic achievement.[157] In other words, the achievement of American Indian children declines with every year they are in school. This phenomenon, which reportedly occurs at about age nine, has been labeled the "cross-over phenomenon." Specifically, prior to age nine, Indian students perform academically as well as white children, but performance begins to deteriorate in third grade. After this, they fall behind white students.[158] One study of Oglala Sioux indicated that students exhibited a cross-over phenomenon, whereby the students achieved satisfactorily until the sixth grade. After the sixth grade, there was a gradual decline in student performance.[159]

Schools throughout the United States use standardized tests to measure school success. Critics of standardized testing report that emphasis on such tests produces a built-in failure for minority students and points to the cultural bias of such tests as an inappropriate method for determining a student's knowledge and ability.[160] One criticism that is often directed against standardized tests is their language bias.[161] For example, American Indian students may have different cognitive styles than the particular cognitive style required by the test. In order to guarantee culturally fair standardized tests, it may be necessary to accept a variety of responses rather than a single response. Most researchers consistently find that American Indian students score lower on almost all standardized measures of achievement than do other ethnic minority groups. In 1958, L. Madison Coombs et al. reported that American Indian children score below the national average on achievement tests and consistently score below non-Indian students.[162] This condition has not changed significantly over the past three and a half decades. John Bryde found that among a group of Oglala Sioux students on the Pine Ridge Reservation, the students scored slightly above the national norms at the fourth and fifth grade levels, but that their performance dropped far below the national norm by the seventh and eighth grades. He explained this phenomenon by suggesting that American Indian students at about the sixth or seventh grade become aware of being "Indian," along with experiencing the feeling of alienation and rejection which destroys their self-esteem, thus impacting their desire to achieve in school.[163]

A number of studies have focused on the mathematical and verbal abilities of American Indian students and have concluded that Indian students have math skills superior to white students.[164] Other researchers have reported that bilingual instruction not only results in improved skills in language, but in mathematics as well; however, American Indian youth are less able than non-Indian adolescents in estimating time.[165] In a study of 172 non-Indian students and 88 Cheyenne Indian students on a multiple-choice test which asked students to select the amount of time required to complete a given activity, results indicated that non-Indian children scored significantly higher on the test at each of the grade levels tested.[166]

Some researchers, pointing to the fact that mixed-bloods do better on achievement tests than full-bloods, suggest that schools are designed around white values more consistent with those who are more assimilated or mixed-blood. John Bryde maintained that lack of achievement by American Indian students in school is psychological. He reported that alienation and conflict between the white and Indian cultures become more focused in adolescence and cause personality disturbances which block achievement.[167] Others reported that mixed-bloods had higher achievement and greater popularity than full-bloods and that alienation in school increased as achievement declined.[168]

There are a number of examples of the misuse of standardized tests.[169] Perhaps one of the greatest concerns for educators of minority students is using tests to define success or failure. Since *A Nation at Risk*,[170] schools throughout the country have been encouraged and even mandated to raise academic standards. These standards, which are closely tied to test results, may, in fact, force more students to leave school early. For example, higher standards defined in terms of testing results will no doubt result in more students being retained in a grade, and students retained in a grade and over-age students are more likely to drop out of school.[171] Research has clearly shown that retention in a grade does not benefit students.[172] Even retention in kindergarten is not beneficial to students. More and more, researchers are suggesting that retention in grade results in students being "pushed out" of school rather than dropping out. Some researchers have even reported that when schools push out at-risk youth, they inevitably look better in the public eye since the average test scores are higher.[173]

Recent literature on dropping out is based in part on research on schools that effectively teach the at-risk student. According to this research, it is not the student's background, but rather the school's response to the student, that determines success in school. Gary Wehlage and Robert Rutter reported that the process of becoming a dropout is complex, because the process of rejecting an institution must be accompanied by the belief that the institution has rejected the person. Their work has focused on the ways that a student's negative school-based experiences can accumulate to the point where the student makes the decision that "school is not for me" and subsequently drops out.[174]

The literature also has reported that potential dropouts have a history of school failures. They tend to be over-age for their grade due to failures. Many are frequently suspended from school and are often absent or truant. Gary Wehlage and Robert Rutter suggested that as a student's negative experiences accumulate, problems develop which cannot be solved because of lack of coping skills. Thus, problems in one area often lead to problems in another.[175] They maintained that the American Indian child who comes from one cultural setting is thrown into a school setting of the mainstream culture which may result in a "values clash." This creates a situation of marginality whereby the American Indian child lives on the margins of two cultures, having loyalties to both, but not being a member of either one. Other researchers have proposed that when the American Indian child enters school, the child's loyalties are toward the parents' values, and that in school the child encounters new values. If the child perceives that his/her values are not understood or appreciated by the school, or if the child is unable to appreciate the new values encountered, conflict often arises. The student then rebels by dropping out, failing courses, or skipping school.[176] Some researchers observed that being successful in school can create dissonance for the American Indian student:

> The native student who aspires to success is faced with the difficult and often dissonant task of marching to more than one drum. The dilemma of not rejecting one's own rich, cultural heritage while preparing to be successful in a context which at best ignores or at worst contradicts such a heritage along with its inherent values and ethics is not a simple one.[177]

### Attendance: Truancy/Absenteeism/Detention/Expulsion

Although statistics on truancy, suspension, and absenteeism vary from one American Indian school district to another, interviews with school administrators in

Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota indicate that absenteeism and truancy is a major problem.

The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 provided some insight into the absentee problem. The study reported that 11% of American Indians in the eighth grade missed five or more days of school during a four-week period, as compared to less than 10% for Asians, whites, and Black Americans. Harold Hodgkinson concluded that missing large numbers of school days contributed to the high dropout rate for American Indians.[178] Indian educator, Dean Chavers reported that absenteeism among Indian students runs as high as 25%, compared to the national rate of 7%. He noted that often 10- to 15-year-olds stay home to babysit younger siblings.[179]

Hal Gilliland noted that tardiness and absenteeism among American Indian youth are often the result of home situations and suggested that teachers try to understand the situation and work to improve it rather than criticize the student:

> Many Indian children are continually in trouble for excessive tardiness or absence. Tardiness is usually the fault of the parents rather than the child. If the home does not run by an urban time schedule, it may be almost impossible for the child to always be on time. If a girl is the only baby sitter when her mother has to be gone, responsibilities at home must come before school. The school needs to work with the home to try to solve these problems, but if children are continually scolded, punished, or harassed for something they cannot do anything about, they cannot be blamed if they make little effort to improve in those or other ways.[180]

It appears that one of the reasons many at-risk youth dislike school is that they are frequently placed on in-school detention or expelled from school. In a study of dropouts conducted by the Children's Defense Fund, it was found that 25% of all dropouts had been expelled from school before they dropped out and that another 20% had been identified as having behavior problems by their teachers.[181]

Two national panels, the National Board of Inquiry into Schools and the National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics, reported that the majority of school expulsions are the result of nonthreatening behavior. The most common infractions included: "defiance of authority," "chronic tardiness," "chronic absence," and "profanity or vulgarity." The negative effect of expulsion was addressed by the panels as ineffective in encouraging discipline and further alienated students from school by keeping them out of class. It was also found that in many schools, due process was neglected and a student's explanation meant very little. In addition, the panels found that minority students are three times as likely to be expelled than white students and that in integrated schools, minority students constitute a disproportional number of the expulsions.[182]

Although detention, which is generally in the form of in-school, three-day suspensions, is less frequent, most detentions appear to be the result of absenteeism, tardiness, and truancy, further promoting problems of non-class attendance such as failure of classes, low achievement, and retention in grade. This system may contribute to what Gary Wehlage and Robert Rutter referred to as the rejection of the school by the individual student, because the school has already rejected the individual.[183]

Although some studies have indicated that absence from school may not impact achievement as much as some researchers have maintained, it appears that being absent or being placed in detention or expelled can, in fact, become habit forming and may lead to dropping out of school.

## Teacher Attitudes and Expectations

The quality and motivations of teachers working with American Indian children have been the subject of much debate. The first teachers were missionaries who sought to Christianize and convert their charges. This group was followed by government-contracted teachers who were employed to assimilate the Indian child into the white society. Neither group had knowledge of, or a particular interest in, the American Indian culture or language. It was not until the 1930s that the federal government required contracted teachers to have a four-year teaching degree.

Personal accounts of Indian Service teachers reported recruitment of undesirable staff by the government bureaucracy in school and dormitory facilities.[184]

Throughout the history of Indian education, scholars and writers have noted the difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified, committed teachers. Even today, the BIA reports a 50% turnover rate every two years among its professional staff.[185]

Some researchers suggest that the school and teachers are potential sources of emotional stress for Indian children. They have pointed to lack of Indian role models and curricula at odds with the child's Native culture. One Montana educator noted that teachers often refer to American Indian students as being disadvantaged, and was quick to point out that Indian students are often at a disadvantage in classrooms where the teacher does not know the culture or lacks the understanding to adapt instruction to meet the needs of culturally different children. He suggested that:

> Teachers' actions and attitudes should never imply that one culture is superior to another. The purpose of education is not to turn all students into middle class citizens, or carbon copies of the teacher. . . .[186]

Others have noted that Indian children have little chance of being exposed to Indian teachers who can act as role models. Less than 15% of teachers of American Indian students are themselves American Indian, and this figure is cut by three-fourths at the high school level.[187]

A number of researchers have attributed the historically poor achievement of Indian students to white teachers who are unable or unwilling to pay attention to the cultural background and values of American Indian students:

> Teachers who come to the reservation day schools often know little about the children they are going to teach. . . . Teacher orientation and training sessions pay scant attention to Indian cultural values or to problems which the teacher may encounter with children . . . who have different values and know different experiences.[188]

In a study of Indian students in New Mexico's public schools, it was determined that although white teachers were aware of the differences in language and customs, they were not aware of the more subtle, intangible differences such as values and attitudes.[189] Other researchers have presented similar views:

> The school, representing the mainstream values, seeks to assimilate the Indian pupil rather than respect his identity and accommodate him in the curriculum. It rhetorically expounds the vaunted pluralism of America, but refuses to practice it in the classroom.[190]

Hal Gilliland cautioned teachers about making assumptions concerning their students:

> Teachers moving into Native American communities tend to assume that because the people have accepted modern ways of life, the old culture is lost. . . . Since each Native American tribe is a unique group, teachers cannot assume any student believes or follows all the values of a 'typical Native culture' or follows the patterns of the non-Native society. Students are somewhere in between, usually nearer one end of the scale than the other.[191]

Dick Little Bear, a well-respected Northern Cheyenne bilingual educator, maintains that there is a need for teachers on Indian reservations to work with parents:

> One reason for that need is that most of those who teach Indian students are non-Indians from the dominant society. Most of their teacher training has been monocultural, with the middle-class forming their socioeconomic norm. However, teachers need to realize that when they teach Indian students they are not teaching the norm and that the students they are teaching are being impacted daily by a dynamic culture.[192]

Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst maintained that school achievement was not important to Indian students or their parents because they could not directly relate education to the future opportunity for success. They noted specifically that whereas white middle class students seem to view school achievement as an important part of their total identity, Indian students view school achievement as a separate activity which does not influence their view of themselves. They concluded that the often-held opinion that school performance and self-concept, which appears important within the white culture, does not hold true for Indian students.[193]

Many researchers have stressed the need for informing teachers about cultural differences among their students.[194] Others have noted that Indian children are predisposed to learning cooperatively in groups rather than competitively as individuals, and point out that Indian children placed in the "spotlight" or singled out will withdraw.[195] Anthony Brown concurred with this theory, reporting that Cherokee Indian children were more cooperative and less competitive than an Anglo comparison group.[196] A number of researchers have proposed that classroom organization and structure that emphasizes individual competitiveness rather than group cooperation adversely affects the achievement of students.[197] Other investigators have reported that American Indian children often observe an activity, then review the activity in their heads until they are certain they can perform the task before undertaking it.[198] Because of the incongruities suggested by the researchers regarding learning styles and cultural attitudes of American Indian children and the school environment, a number of educators endorse classroom organization which promotes cooperation rather than one with a more competitive structure.[199]

Other researchers endorse the modification of classroom teaching techniques to accommodate the learning styles of Indian students, suggesting that American Indian education has traditionally emphasized attitudes on self-reliance, respect for nature and wisdom, generosity, and personal freedom, and that teachers must consider these characteristics.[200]

Some researchers have found that American Indian children passively resist authority, follow directions submissively, observe activities passively, and complain about school regimentation, rules, and regulations.[201] Rosalie Wax reported that problems encountered by Oglala Sioux boys reflected a culture which stressed loyalty and dependence on peers, physical recklessness, and impetuousness. She maintained that Sioux boys did not hold values required for success in school, and noted, "Not only is he ignorant of how to buck the rules, he doesn't even know the rules."[202]

Historically, passivity in the classroom among Indian children has been expected. The 1928 *Meriam Report* found that Indian children were forced to remain quiet and that the majority of the schools had locked rooms used for isolating and containing unruly students.[203] Donna Deyhle reported that Indian students are expected to sit passively in the classroom, to read and memorize information, and to listen to lectures.[204] Jim Cummins reported that most teachers use a passive method of instruction in the classroom.[205] In return, passivity is expected of students and those who do not comply are often disciplined in terms of suspensions, promoting again the pushing-out concept often interpreted as dropping out. There is some evidence suggesting that passive teaching strategies are widely used in "low tracking" classes, where minority students are commonly placed. Compensatory programs like Chapter I have often been criticized as providing mechanical, passive instruction which results in student boredom, decreased motivation, and lack of interest.[206] In Donna Deyhle's study, she reported that Indian students often described boredom with remedial classes and uninteresting subject matter.[207] A 1989 study of Alaskan education asked high school seniors why their peers dropped out of school. Consistently, students blamed unsupportive teachers, inability to memorize information required to pass courses, and boredom.[208]

Although it is commonly assumed that Indian students who drop out are failing academically, a study of Navajo at-risk youth reported that the academic achievement of dropouts did not differ significantly from those who remained in school and graduated. In fact, 45% of the dropouts had a B or better grade average.[209]

Historically, tracking has been used with American Indian students. Part of this dates back to the early beliefs held by missionaries/teachers that Indians were lazy, that basic skills in spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic were sufficient, and that a strong academic education for Indians promoted nothing more than indolence.[210] Therefore, teachers who have low expectations of Indian students have repeatedly counseled students into vocationally-oriented curricula. This "tracking," which is more commonly associated with secondary schools, results in a substandard education for students and leads to lower-class jobs and eventually lower-class status as adults.[211] Research has demonstrated repeatedly that teachers treat lower-tracked students differently than high-tracked students. When one considers that over 40% of Indian youth are in the lowest quartile on achievement test scores in math, reading, science, and history, and less than 10% are in the upper quartile, it is clear that tracking impacts a vast majority of Indian students.[212] One researcher has gone so far as to suggest that tracking students into vocational education programs segregates poor minority students in an effort to preserve the academic curriculum for middle and upper class students.[213] While this may not be the same reason in a reservation school, it is possible that teachers support tracking into vocational programs for academically deficient students so that they may be left unencumbered to teach the "good" students. Good in this sense is meant both to imply academic achievement as well as passivity.

A number of researchers have suggested that the parochialism of the teaching staff in American Indian schools inhibits the learning of students:

> Many of the teachers at the elementary level are middle-aged wives of men who have farms in the vicinity. They have lived in the area for a number of years, or in some cases all of their lives, and are acquainted with the

> Indians' behavior and their 'shortcomings.' They are not idealistic and are not surprised at anything the Indians do.[214]

Other researchers feel that teachers' attitudes toward Indian students are critical to success in school:[215]

> A teacher's attitude is . . . contagious. . . . A teacher who can earn the respect of Indian students and who can show them that they are respected for what they are is well on the road to giving those children success in school. . . . Too many teachers and other well-intentioned individuals look at the physical surroundings in which Indian students live, the prejudice they face, their problems in school, and they sympathize. They feel sorry for them. These students do not need sympathy; they need something to be proud of. Pity and pride do not go together.[216]

Much attention is given in the literature to the attitudes of teachers toward Indian children. Some researchers have found that white teachers often demonstrate contempt for Indian students while, on the other hand, many teachers sincerely like their Indian students.[217] Estelle Fuchs and Robert Havighurst found that Indian adolescents held more favorable attitudes toward their teachers than Anglo-American students. However, they also noted that there was a considerable amount of hostility among Indian students toward teachers whom they perceived as being prejudiced or racist against Indians.[218]

On the other hand, a 1990 report which compared ethnic students' attitudes toward teachers found few Indian students report that they feel teachers are really interested in them, nor did they feel that their teachers listened to them. In addition, Indian students reported unfair discipline from teachers.[219] Donna Deyhle also reported in a study of Navajo and Ute students that students complained about teachers who did not care about them or help them and suggested that minimal attention by the teacher was interpreted by students as rejection.[220]

Dick Little Bear noted that in the teacher-parent interaction, Indian parents are often judged in relation to historical circumstances by the teachers:

> Stereotypes and misconceptions have been the lot of Indians since their first contact with Europeans. Many non-Indians continue to rely on these stereotypes and misconceptions — often confusing them with truth — which categorize Indians in the worst possible manner.[221]

He noted, too, that this problem is not just confined to non-Indian teachers:

> . . . even if teachers are Indian, they may be urban Indians with little or no knowledge about reservation cultures . . . even if teachers are from the reservation they may have unquestioningly accepted the values of the dominant society as being superior to those of the Indian.[222]

Hal Gilliland maintained that many teachers have unrealistic expectations of students:

> They give them homework and penalize them if they do not get it done, without considering the home situation. . . . It is unrealistic to expect parents and extended family members who do not read for recreation, who see little relevance between school and 'life,' and who have little or no knowledge of the subject the child is studying, to shut off the TV and devote time to helping or even encouraging the child.[223]

Robert Coles pointed out in his three-volume work, *Children of Crisis*, that many children enter school without obvious psychological problems but don't do well in school because they are labeled as coming from so-called "disadvantaged" or "deprived" homes by teachers. Because of the socioeconomic status of their families, Coles suggested that students coming from poor homes are expected to fail by teachers, administrators, and other individuals involved in the operation and policy making of the school:

> They come from poor homes. They don't eat good food; and indeed many physicians and nutritionists and neurophysiologists would argue that a faulty diet, low in critically important vitamins, minerals and proteins, causes serious damage to an infant's brain, so that eventually he comes to school retarded, not by an accident or disease or injury, but the repercussions of a nation's social and economic problem, which becomes a very personal, everyday problem for millions of families. Yet even if poor parents can provide their children with decent meals and adequate medical care and suitable clothes . . . Does the mother give her children a sense of confidence, or do she and her husband feel discouraged about life most of the time? . . . Mothers who live in broken-down, rat-infested tenements, who never quite know when the next few dollars will come, have little energy left for their children. Life is grim and hard, and the child simply has to find out. He does, too; he learns it and learns it and learns it. He learns how to survive all sorts of threats and dangers. He learns why his parents have given up on school, why they may have tried and fallen flat on their faces. He learns about things like racial hatred . . . whether he is an insider or an outsider, whether people like storekeepers or property owners or policemen treat his family with kindness and respect or with suspicion if not out-and-out contempt.[224]

In the book, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, the authors reveal that the preconceptions of teachers serve as self-fulfilling prophecies for students.[225] Teacher perceptions and expectations negatively affect achievement in American Indian children. Research demonstrates that poor and minority students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs and college-bound curricula and overrepresented in special education and vocational programs.[226]

The question arises about the qualities of teachers that contribute to their negative perceptions of the American Indian student's ability. One study compared teachers' family of origin socioeconomic status with the perceptions they had about the school and students where they worked.[227] The researchers found that teachers who came from families with high socioeconomic status held lower expectations for minority students. Further, it was found that teachers' values affect their evaluation of student performance.

The power of teachers' perceptions on student performance is dramatically demonstrated throughout the research.[228] In a longitudinal study of Black children, it was found that kindergarten teachers made evaluations of a student's expected abilities based on physical appearance, language style, and socioeconomic status of the child's family. Without any regard to students' academic abilities, teachers placed students into three groups based on perceptions of whether or not they were "fast learners." It is important to note that the "fast learners" were perceived by the teacher to be clean, well-dressed, spoke standard English, interacted verbally with the teacher, and had families who were not on welfare.[229]

When an examination is made of how teachers treat "fast learners" as opposed to "slow learners" with regard to the amount of time spent on engaging children in the teaching/learning process, giving help and providing opportunities, it is easy to understand why the gap between fast learners and slow learners increases with each year in school.

Researchers of the dropout phenomenon have consistently reported that student retention is associated with the increased probability of dropping out rather than improved chances for graduation. In fact, research indicates that dropouts are five times more likely to have been retained in one grade, and students who have been retained in two grades have nearly a 100% probability of dropping out.[230] When one considers that 29% of American Indian students have already been retained by the eighth grade, it is understandable why so many Indian students are at risk.

According to a Gallup poll, 72% of the U.S. public favors stricter grade promotion standards.[231] And yet, Thomas Holmes, from the University of Georgia, recently conducted a synthesis of research on 63 controlled studies where students were retained and found that in 54 of the studies, the students who were retained actually performed more poorly on average than if they had not repeated a grade.[232]

There is considerable evidence that children perceive retention as punishment.[233] In fact, one researcher found that children rated repeating a grade more stressful than "wetting in class" or being caught stealing. The only two events identified by children as being more stressful than repeating a grade were "going blind" or "losing a parent."[234]

Basically, researchers have not been able to determine why retention doesn't work. Some have suggested that the negative emotional effects of repeating a grade inhibit subsequent learning. Others speculate that repeating the same material is an ineffective means of instruction.

Studies have found that when parents believe their children are smarter than other children, these children do better than other children.[235] If children are retained, it is likely that parents doubt their children's abilities. Thus, if parents' positive beliefs have positive academic outcomes for children, it follows that negative beliefs about ability would have negative academic outcomes. In fact, studies have shown that parents are more likely to focus on children's ability during the first half of the school year to a preoccupation with retention during the second half of the year.[236]

Even though the research is inconsistent about teacher attitudes, expectations, and tracking and retention, it is obvious that the teacher plays a major role in the lives of students in how they are treated and whether they are tracked or retained.

## Racism, Discrimination, and Prejudice

The placement of American Indians on reservations, where in many cases they were forbidden to leave and interact with non-Indians, was legislative racism sanctioned by the federal government. The removal of Indian children from their home environment and placement in boarding schools further suggested that the Euro-Americans considered their values, laws, and culture superior to that of the American Indian. There is a plethora of literature available on the prevailing attitude of the government throughout history in regard to the American Indian. The Indian was regarded as a savage to be eliminated or converted to the white man's way of thinking. This "civilization" of the Indian has resulted in a myriad of adjustment problems for subsequent generations of American Indians.

At a very early age, children become aware of racial differences. Several studies indicate that by the time children reach the age of five, they have a clear knowledge of racial differences. The American Indian child has often been made to feel that he/she is different from and inferior to the mainstream society, and because of these circumstances it is often difficult for the Indian child to develop coping skills adequate to meet the demands of society.[237]

A number of studies have been conducted on race and self-perceptions of children. In a study of whites, Mexican-Americans, Black Americans, and American Indians, it was found that each ethnic group saw its race very favorably as a whole and saw the other groups less favorably. Other researchers studied Indian and white students to learn how they looked upon each of the two cultures and found that although Indian students rated their culture more favorably, they did not seem to identify with one culture more than the other. Socioeconomic status or social class appears to make a difference in establishing group or ethnic identity. Middle class children showed higher rates of racial rejection than did other social classes.[238]

There has been little research conducted on racism, discrimination, and prejudice within and/or among American Indian groups and/or American Indians and non-Indians within the school setting; and yet racism, prejudice, and discrimination clearly exist and may, in fact, be contributors to lack of success of students in the school setting.

Prior to Euro-American contact, all indigenous people were "full-blooded," so to speak. Indigenous North Americans specifically defined themselves in terms of their sociocultural membership, such as Lakota, Arapaho, Cheyenne, or Blackfeet, rather than in terms of a racial group. Although "intertribal" marriages occurred during this period, the tribal societies were able to accommodate the influx of new memberships from other indigenous groups. All of this changed with the coming of the white man, who brought to the new world the concept of race and through intermarriage the introduction of "mixed-bloods" into the tribal societies.

One needs to look no further than the boarding schools which were established to "civilize" the American Indian to find examples of racism that developed within tribal societies. Mary Crow Dog, a student at the St. Francis Boarding School, commented that the degree of Indian blood became a strategy for favoritism and acceptance and pitted students against students:

> In a school like this [St. Francis Boarding School], there is always a lot of favoritism. Girls who were near-white who came from what the nuns called 'nice families,' got preferential treatment. They . . . got to eat ham or eggs and bacon . . . they got easy jobs while the skins [reference to individual with higher degree of Indian blood] . . . always wound up in the laundry room . . . or we wound up scrubbing the floors and doing all the dishes. The school therefore fostered fights and antagonism between whites and breeds.[239]

One researcher who studied Navajo and Ute students reported the issues of racism and cultural maintenance as important factors in contributing to students dropping out of school prematurely and noted that there is considerable conflict between a number of factions in the school. Reportedly, there was conflict between non-Indians and Indians, Navajos and Utes, traditional Navajos and acculturated Navajos, etc. The researcher noted that when issues of racism are coupled with academic difficulties, students are often victims of school experiences that are negative. In addition, it was noted that many Indian students who are successful are often berated by their peers for acting like whites and are looked down on by their friends and families.[240]

Today there is considerable disparity in the proportion of full-bloods and mixed-bloods within tribal groups. The federal government, under the auspices of the BIA, officially recognizes the American Indian as an individual who is one-quarter Indian blood or more. This strategy has resulted in keeping the aggregate number of American Indians at less than 1% of the overall population in the United States and thus reduces any political power that the population may have in terms of elections, lobbying power, etc. Further, this strategy has provided a legitimate means for the government to avoid providing educational support to students in reservation schools who do not meet their blood quantum criteria.

Thus, limited federal resources allocated by the federal government in meeting its obligations to American Indian tribal groups has resulted in tribal resolutions and constitutional amendments that enforce race codes as defined by the BIA on their own populations. This has resulted in excluding members who are less than one-fourth blood from any benefits (including children) in order that the "real Indians" may benefit. Thus the question of American Indian identity has fueled the historical "divide and conquer" strategy by pitting Indian against Indian within their own tribal groups and among other groups. Some American Indian leaders have made efforts to unite their people by pointing out that these issues are not only historical, but a part of colonialism practiced by the government even today. Tim Giago, editor of the Lakota Times, questioned:

> Don't we have enough problems trying to unite without . . . additional headaches? Why must people be categorized as full-bloods, mixed-bloods, etc? Many years ago, the Bureau of Indian Affairs decided to establish blood quanta for the purpose of [tribal] enrollment. At that time, blood quantum was set at one-fourth degree for enrollment. Unfortunately, through the years, this caused the Indian people on the reservation to be categorized and labeled. . . . [This] situation [was] created solely by the BIA, with the able assistance of the Department of the Interior.[241]

To illustrate further the impact that blood quantum criteria has had upon individuals and Indian tribes, the words of Russell Means, American Indian Movement (AIM) activist, are quite pertinent:

> . . . we have Indian people who spend most of their time trying to prevent other Indian people from being recognized as such, just so that a few more crumbs--crumbs from the federal table--may be available to them, personally. I don't have to tell you that this isn't the Indian way of doing things. The Indian way would be to get together and

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> demand what is coming to each and every one of us, instead of trying to cancel each other out. We are acting like colonized peoples, like subject peoples.[242]

Dr. Frank Ryan, an American Indian educator, began during the early 1980s questioning the blood quantum criteria of the federal government for educational benefits to students and denounced it as "racist policy." He called for an abolition of federal guidelines on the issues of Indian identity without lessening the federal obligations to individual and tribal groups.[243] Other Indian leaders have suggested that the federal blood-quantum policies can be described as no less than genocide in their implications. Josephine Mills, a Shoshone activist, charged:

> There is no longer any need to shoot down Indians in order to take away their rights and land . . . legislation is sufficient to do the trick legally.[244]

Perhaps there is no policy adopted by the federal government that is as racist as the blood quantum criteria. It has certainly served to exacerbate tensions among Indian people and has created divisiveness within tribal groups. One historian noted:

> Set the blood quantum at one-quarter, hold to it as a rigid definition of Indians, let intermarriage proceed as it had for centuries, and eventually Indians will be defined out of existence. When that happens, the federal government will be freed of its persistent "Indian problem."[245]

Certainly, one needs to look no further than the population figures of the past two decades to discover that the numbers of full-bloods are decreasing. For example, 65% of all American Indian males today marry non-Indian women. Among American Indian females, marriage to non-Indians is at 62%.[246] As of 1970:

> . . . three-fifths of all births registered as Indian list both parents as Indians [of varying degrees of Indian blood]. More than one-fourth of the remaining Indian births had only an Indian mother, and 15 percent had only an Indian father.[247]

If Indian tribes continue to allow the "divide and conquer" strategies to be enforced in terms of ethnic identification, then racism, discrimination, and prejudice are assured of continuation on Indian reservations. Schools and school children are often the most affected, not only in terms of the quality of educational programs that are offered, but in terms of how the individual child deals with his/her own self-identity and tribal-identity and how racism, prejudice, and discrimination at the hands of their "own kind" contribute to their success or lack of success in school. Perhaps the answer for tribal groups can be found, in part, by the experience of the Cherokee:

> In developing a new tribal constitution in the 1970s . . . the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma established no minimum blood quantum for membership. Instead, one must only trace descent along Cherokee lines. . . . This comparatively generous definition has expanded the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma population: in the mid-1970s there were only about 12,000 enrolled Cherokee . . . in 1985 there were over 64,300. There are still full-blood and traditional Cherokee, despite the myth in Oklahoma and elsewhere, of Cherokee assimilation. . . . They continue in the 1980s, insulated from American society by the much larger number of mixed bloods and less traditional Cherokee. . . . This allowed the [nation] to reestablish itself after virtual 'dissolution' and to achieve political power in Oklahoma.[248]

Although incidences of racism, prejudice, and discrimination vary from one geographical region to another and one reservation to another, there are a number of studies which seem to support the idea that the more "white" a student appears (mixed-bloods), the more acceptable that student is to mainstream society. In the long run, this acceptability is defined in terms of more opportunities in school and employment. Therefore, the questions of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, whether practiced within the tribal groups or among mainstream society, appear to have a major impact on American Indian youth.

# *Chapter 4*

## The Study

### Introduction

This study was conducted through the funding of a 28-month (which included a 10 month extension) OERI grant beginning in September, 1991, and ending December 1994. As originally proposed, it had been the intent of the researcher to collect data from 1,000 participants graduating or dropping out from 1979-1989. During negotiations, the program officer rejected those years as including students who were "too far removed from school" to allow for a valid study. It was agreed that the study would include only students who had graduated or dropped out from 1989-1991, to allow for a "more recent recollection" of their high school events. This decision significantly reduced the potential participant population. The original proposal called for a participant group of 1,000 with a 75% return of the initial questionnaire. In actuality, the researcher identified 250 potential participants. Fifty-one of those students (20%) had either moved from the reservation, could not be located after numerous attempts, or had died. One hundred and ninety-nine students were eventually contacted and asked to participate in the study; 165 of that group returned the questionnaires resulting in an 83% return.

Initially, the researcher attempted to identify an equal number of graduates and dropout participants; however, when this proved impossible, participants were chosen on the basis of the year they did or should have graduated (1989, 1990, or 1991). This resulted in 108 graduates participating in the study, 55 dropouts, and two who failed to identify either graduation or dropping out.

Since the researcher had identified four major correlates: personal factors, cultural factors, school factors, and family factors and their subsets; the program officer requested that one item be added which had not been included in the original proposal: abuse of students by teachers. Items related to this variable were added to the questionnaire and were included in the questionnaire.

In addition to the change in the population group and the addition of a variable regarding teacher abuse of students, one other change was recommended by the program officer. The researcher had proposed the use of a multiple regression statistic as a part of the analysis. During the negotiations, the grants officer recommended the use of a discriminate analysis.

All three of the conditions for funding, as requested by the program officer who negotiated the grant, were met. Since the time of the grant award, this researcher has worked with Dr. Oliver Moles, as the program officer. Dr. Moles, who was not involved in the initial revision/negotiation of the grant, has been extremely supportive of this study and has provided guidance to the researcher through the 28-month period. No further changes were made to the project.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study, *Youth at Greater Risk: A Study of Native Americans*, was twofold:

1. To identify the factors that keep Native American students in school (graduation).
2. To identify the factors that result in their leaving school prematurely (dropping out).

The following hypotheses guided this study:

- There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the dependent variables for high school graduates or high school dropouts.
- It is possible to discriminate between high school graduates and high school dropouts using the dependent variables (personal factors, family background, school factors, and cultural factors).

In reporting the study herein, it is important to note the following factors:

- Participants were American Indian males and females residing on reservations.
- Participants had either graduated or dropped out of school during 1989, 1990, or 1991.
- Participants were from American Indian tribal groups in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota and are commonly referred to as the Northern Plains Tribal groups.

## Data-Gathering Methods and Procedures

School administrators from each of the reservations assisted the researcher in identifying the populations on their respective reservations. Due to mobility, approximately 20% of those originally identified no longer resided on the reservation. All participants who were available were personally contacted by the administrator and researcher and requested to participate in the study. The researcher was identified and each participant was asked if he/she would be willing to be involved in a randomly selected group to be interviewed by the researcher. All participants agreed.

Both the questionnaire and the interview instrument were designed using the most current research on gender, at-risk youth, graduates, and high school dropouts. The instruments included sections on the correlates most often identified as relating to success or the lack of success in school. Figure 1 illustrates those correlates.

**Figure 1. Correlates and subsets**

| Personal Factors | Family Factors |
|---|---|
| Substance Abuse | Family Composition |
| Peer Pressure | Socioeconomic Status |
| Trouble with the Law | Parental Education Levels |
| Low Self-esteem | Older Sibling (dropout or graduate) |
| Teen Pregnancy | Substance Abuse |

| School Factors | Cultural Factors |
|---|---|
| Academic Achievement | Tribal Self-identity/Pride |
| Teacher Attitudes | Discrimination, Racism |
| Teacher Expectations | Bilingualism |
| School Attendance | |
| Abuse by School Employee | |

One hundred and sixty-five participants completed the Native American School Study (NASS), which is a 140 item questionnaire. This questionnaire collected demographic data as well as data on each of the four identified correlates: personal factors, family background, school factors, and cultural factors.

Seventy-six of the graduates were selected to be interviewed and 37 of the dropouts were interviewed. All interviews were conducted by the researcher and principle investigator, Dr. Ardy Sixkiller Clarke.

The interview allowed for the flexibility of the participants to respond freely and in depth to the questions, to express their responses in their own words and in their own way, and to clarify or explain at length any responses. An "open ended interview" process was used. For example, each participant was asked a series of predesigned questions that could have been answered "yes," "no," "I don't know," "I can't remember," or "I prefer not to talk about that topic." If the respondent answered "yes" or "no," the researcher took the time to ask further questions, which probed for more information, feelings, attitudes, perceptions, and opinions. If the participant responded, "I prefer not to talk about that topic," the researcher honored the response and moved on to the next question.

All questionnaires were completed anonymously by the individuals and in private. All interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants. Forty percent (40%) of the interviews were conducted in private homes, 20% in an institutional environment such as a school conference room or counselor's office, 15% were conducted at a job site and the remaining were conducted at a setting selected by the participant, such as a restaurant, a relatives house, a park, etc.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher spent approximately 40 minutes discussing the purpose of the study and other questions from the participant. Generally, this period included rather informal discussions of common acquaintances, relatives, and friends, and responding to questions about the researcher's career and personal life.

The interviews ranged in length from fifty minutes to an hour and a half, depending upon the individual's willingness and/or inclination to respond to the questions. At no time did the researcher move on to another series of questions before the participant had ceased discussion of a specific topic. In addition, the interviews were not scheduled within a specific time frame. This avoided the problem of "hurrying" a participant. In many cases, the interviews were very emotional, but at no time was an interview terminated by the participant.

All interviewees gave permission for the interviews to be taped. Notes were also taken by the researcher.

All interviewees were assured anonymity of individual and tribal group as a condition for participation.

## Description of the Population

Participants in the study came from five reservations and three states. Approximately 60% of the participants were female and almost half of all the respondents spoke their Native language and half did not (see tables 1-3).

**Table 1. Gender of respondents.**

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 58 | 35.2 |
| Female | 97 | 58.8 |
| No response | 10 | 6.1 |

**Table 2. Reservations of respondents.**

| Reservation | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Blackfeet | 29 | 17.6 |
| Cheyenne River | 37 | 22.4 |
| Fort Belknap | 30 | 18.2 |
| Fort Berthod | 49 | 29.7 |
| Fort Peck | 12 | 7.3 |
| No response | 8 | 4.8 |

**Table 3. Respondents who speak native language.**

| Native language | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Speakers | 76 | 46.1 |
| Non-speakers | 82 | 49.7 |
| No response | 7 | 4.2 |

While 53% of the participants came from a two parent home, 25% were reared in a home with one parent; the remainder lived mostly with other relatives (see table 4). Nearly 21% of the females reported getting pregnant while in high school (see table 5).

**Table 4. Family structure of respondents.**

| Family structure | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| One parent home | 41 | 24.8 |
| Two parent home | 88 | 53.3 |
| Lived with grandparent | 20 | 12.1 |
| Lived with other relative | 6 | 3.6 |
| Lived with non-relative | 1 | .6 |
| No response | 9 | 5.5 |

**Table 5. Teen parent.**

| Teen parent | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 34 | 20.6 |
| No | 129 | 78.2 |
| No response | 2 | 1.2 |

Although 79% of the participants reported coming from non-alcohol abusing families, 62% reported using alcohol while in high school (see tables 6 and 7). This may serve to explain the reason why over 16% of the participants were incarcerated while in jail and 23% reported being in trouble with the law (see tables 8 and 9).

**Table 6. Adolescent use of alcohol.**

| Alcohol use | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Used alcohol | 102 | 61.8 |
| Did not use alcohol | 59 | 35.8 |
| No response | 4 | 2.4 |

**Table 7. Respondents from alcohol abusing homes.**

| Alcoholic homes | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Children of abusers | 30 | 18.2 |
| Children of non-abusers | 130 | 78.8 |
| No response | 5 | 3.0 |

**Table 8. Respondents who were in trouble with the law while in high school.**

| Respondents | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| In trouble | 38 | 23.0 |
| Not in trouble | 122 | 73.9 |
| No response | 5 | 3.0 |

**Table 9. Respondents who were incarcerated while in high school.**

| Respondents | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 27 | 16.4 |
| No | 134 | 81.2 |
| No response | 4 | 2.4 |

Forty-nine percent (49%) of the participants reported that their mother had graduated from high school; while only 40% had fathers who had graduated. Thirty-two percent (32%) came from homes where an older sibling had dropped out (see tables 10-12).

Table 10. Educational attainment of mother for respondents.

| Level | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Graduate | 81 | 49.1 |
| Non-graduate | 77 | 46.7 |
| No response | 7 | 4.2 |

Table 11. Educational attainment of father for respondents.

| Level | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Graduate | 66 | 40.0 |
| Non-graduate | 94 | 57.0 |
| No response | 5 | 3.0 |

Table 12. Respondent's older sibling a dropout.

| Sibling | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Dropout | 53 | 32.1 |
| Non-dropout | 109 | 66.1 |
| No response | 3 | 1.8 |

The majority of the participants (53%) reported living in a bicultural home (both cultures used equally) and approximately half reported that both their parents and they (the participants) spoke their Native language; whereas 72% reported that their grandparents spoke the Native language (see tables 13-15).

Table 13. Native language ability of respondent's parents.

| Language use | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Native language spoken | 78 | 47.3 |
| Native language not spoken | 82 | 49.7 |
| No response | 5 | 3.0 |

Table 14. Native language ability of respondent's grandparents.

| Language use | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Native language spoken | 119 | 72.1 |
| Native language not spoken | 41 | 24.8 |
| No response | 5 | 3.0 |

**Table 15. Family description.**

| Family Description | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Traditional/mostly Native culture | 36 | 21.8 |
| Contemporary/mostly white culture | 31 | 18.8 |
| Bicultural/used both cultures | 88 | 53.3 |
| No response | 10 | 6.1 |

Forty percent (40%) of the participants reported coming from poverty or a low-income home environment, however 57% reported having a mother who worked outside the home (see tables 16 and 17).

**Table 16. Socio-economic status of respondent's family.**

| Income levels | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| High | 11 | 6.7 |
| Average | 83 | 50.3 |
| Low | 65 | 39.4 |
| No response | 6 | 3.6 |

**Table 17. Respondent's mother worked outside the home.**

| Employment status | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Working mother | 94 | 57.0 |
| Non-working mother | 64 | 38.8 |
| No response | 7 | 4.2 |

Although 62% of the participants reported using alcohol, other substance abuse was prevalent as well. Thirty-five percent (35%) used marijuana, 14% used inhalants, and 66% smoked cigarettes while in high school (see tables 18-20).

**Table 18. Use of marijuana by respondents.**

| Usage | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Used marijuana | 58 | 35.2 |
| Did not use marijuana | 104 | 63.0 |
| No response | 3 | 1.8 |

Table 19. Use of inhalants by respondents.

| Usage | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Used inhalants | 23 | 13.9 |
| Did not use inhalants | 139 | 84.2 |
| No response | 3 | 1.8 |

Table 20. Tobacco usage by respondents.

| Tobacco use | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Smoked cigarettes | 108 | 65.5 |
| Did not smoke | 54 | 32.7 |
| No response | 3 | 1.8 |

Additionally, 49% reported being involved in premature sexual activity while in high school and 9% reported being victims of sexual assault/rape from peers, relatives or friends (see tables 21 and 22). Nearly 13% of the participants reported being sexually abused by a school employee (see table 23).

Table 21. Premature sexual activity by respondents.

| Premature sex | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 80 | 48.5 |
| No | 82 | 49.7 |
| No response | 3 | 1.8 |

Table 22. Respondents reporting sexual assault/rape.

| Assault/Rape | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 14 | 8.5 |
| No | 147 | 89.1 |
| No response | 4 | 2.4 |

**Table 23. Respondents reporting abuse by school employees.**

| Abuse by school employee | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Physical abuse | 28 | 7.0 |
| Sexual abuse | 21 | 12.7 |
| Verbal abuse | 42 | 25.5 |

Of the participants, nearly 23% had been retained at least one year in school (see table 24).

**Table 24. Respondents retained in school.**

| Retention | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 37 | 22.4 |
| No | 124 | 75.2 |
| No response | 4 | 2.4 |

Discrimination and racism clearly plays a heavy role in the life of American Indian adolescents. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the participants reported being discriminated against, 44% admitted to fighting over racist comments directed at them and 15% felt they had been jailed unjustly because they were American Indian. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the respondents reported that they believed their lives would have been "easier" had they not been born Indian (see table 25). Seventy-seven percent (77%) reported that they believed their teachers to be prejudiced against American Indians (see table 26).

**Table 25. Respondents reporting discrimination/racism in their lives.**

| Factor | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Life would have been easier if not born an Indian | 62 | 37.6 |
| Got into fight over racist comments directed at you | 73 | 44.2 |
| Sought revenge over racist comments directed at you | 39 | 23.9 |
| Discriminated against because you were an Indian | 120 | 72.7 |
| Arrested unjustly because you were an Indian | 24 | 14.5 |

**Table 26. Reported teacher attitudes by respondents.**

| Attitudes | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers prejudiced | 127 | 77.0 |
| Teachers unapproachable | 85 | 51.5 |
| Teachers humiliated student | 74 | 44.8 |
| Teachers insensitive to Indian culture | 43 | 26.1 |
| Teachers ignored student in class | 71 | 43.0 |
| Teachers had favorite students | 108 | 65.5 |
| Teachers favored white students or Indians who were part white | 73 | 44.2 |
| Teachers didn't care if you learned | 68 | 41.2 |
| Teachers favored students whose parents had money or position in the community | 72 | 43.6 |
| Teachers prejudged students by older siblings | 42 | 25.5 |

Despite the fact that the graduates outnumbered the dropouts almost two to one in this study, neither group felt positive about their teachers as can be noted in table 26. Not only did they report that their teachers were prejudiced, but 52% found them unapproachable, 65% felt that teachers used favoritism, 44% felt teachers favored students whose parents had money or position, 44% felt teachers favored white students over American Indian students, and 45% reported being humiliated by teachers. Forty-one percent (41%) felt that teachers "didn't care if they learned."

When participants were given a list of factors for dropping out of school or staying in school and graduating, the four most important factors for staying in school as reported by the graduates were: mother expected me to graduate (76%), wanted to make a good life for self (62%), school was personally important (61%), and had high expectations of self (59%) (see table 27).

Table 27. Graduates' reasons for staying in school.

| Factor | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| School important personally | 100 | 60.6 |
| Friends influenced me to graduate | 33 | 20.0 |
| Wanted to get a good job | 89 | 53.9 |
| Wanted to make a good life for myself | 102 | 61.8 |
| Had high expectations of myself | 92 | 55.8 |
| Felt good about myself in school | 63 | 38.2 |
| Liked making good grades | 71 | 43.0 |
| Mother expected me to graduate | 81 | 73.0 |
| Father expected me to graduate | 68 | 41.2 |
| Grandmother expected me to graduate | 60 | 36.4 |
| Grandfather expected me to graduate | 59 | 35.8 |
| Wanted an education so I could help my family | 73 | 44.2 |
| Parents were very involved in my education | 45 | 27.3 |
| Parents would have never permitted my dropping out | 69 | 41.8 |
| Parents cared about my grades | 73 | 44.2 |
| Parents helped with homework | 31 | 18.8 |
| Parents were very aware of my activities | 55 | 33.3 |
| Parents had rules for my behavior | 67 | 40.6 |

When the dropouts were asked the same questions, none of those factors surfaced. In fact, the reasons for dropping out were not related to positive self-image or positive family relationships. Two major areas surfaced among dropouts: negative family situation and negative teacher/student relationships. Over 18% of the students who dropped out reported poverty as the reason. Fifteen percent (15%) reported that they were forced to grow up too fast, 12% quit school to get away from home, and over 7% reported quitting school and running away because they were abused. The other major reason(s) involved the school and the teachers: no teacher believed in me (16%), school was boring (15%), teachers ignored me (15%), teachers did not like me (14%), teachers didn't care (14%), and teachers expected me to drop out (see table 28).

**Table 28. Dropouts' reasons for leaving school prematurely.**

| Factor | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| No teacher believed in me | 27 | 16.3 |
| Teachers expected me to drop out | 23 | 13.9 |
| Always getting into trouble in school | 13 | 7.8 |
| Skipped school a lot | 22 | 13.4 |
| Not interested in school | 23 | 13.9 |
| School was boring | 24 | 14.5 |
| Teachers didn't care | 23 | 13.9 |
| Failed a lot of classes | 13 | 7.8 |
| Got blamed for things in school I did not do | 10 | 6.0 |
| Suspended from school and didn't go back | 16 | 9.7 |
| My friends dropped out and I followed them | 14 | 8.4 |
| School administrators were "out to get me" | 10 | 6.0 |
| Never saw value in a high school education | 19 | 11.5 |
| Had no friends in school | 14 | 8.4 |
| Teachers did not like me | 23 | 13.9 |
| Teachers made fun of me and my lack of abilities | 20 | 12.1 |
| Teachers singled me out and humiliated me | 21 | 10.7 |
| Teachers ignored me | 24 | 14.5 |
| I got married | 8 | 4.8 |
| Associated with "wrong crowd" and lost interest in school | 21 | 10.7 |
| Started drinking alcohol and lost interest in school | 23 | 13.9 |
| Started using drugs and lost interest in school | 15 | 9.1 |
| I was forced to grow up too fast and lost interest in school | 32 | 15.3 |
| I quit school to get away from home | 19 | 11.5 |
| I was abused at home and I quit school and ran away | 12 | 7.2 |
| My family was very poor and I quit school to get a job | 30 | 18.2 |

As a final item on the questionnaire, students were asked to "express in their own words" what they believed to be the three most important reasons for dropping out or staying in school. For students who dropped out, poverty surfaced as the most important reason for dropping out. Many of them wrote about not having money for school supplies or school activities, having to help out their family either by taking care of younger siblings, grandparents, etc.; inadequate clothing; or having to work (mostly ranch work) in order to help out. The second and third most often given reasons centered around the insensitivity of teachers and the lack of a caring environment within the school. Participants responses ranged from "I felt ashamed in school," simply "teachers," "I was too old and in grade school," "teachers told me I was dumb or stupid," "racism from school staff," "boring teachers that didn't care," to "school didn't fit my life style and no one helped me to make it fit."

Graduates on the other hand cited "mothers' and grandparents'" expectations of staying in school and graduating most frequently. A "strong belief in self" surfaced as the second major reason for staying in school. The idea of "getting a good job" was the third most important reason for staying in school.

# *Chapter 5*

## The Findings

At-risk behavior is a complicated phenomenon. The literature highlights a variety of factors that may influence it. Individually, these factors may contribute to dropping out of school; and collectively, they may interact to synergistically increase the likelihood of dropping out. Numerous variables that could contribute to Native American students dropping out of school were collected in the Native American School Study survey. Selected variables from this instrument were grouped in the areas of Personal Problems, School Factors, Family Factors, and Cultural Issues. Two separate types of analyses were then conducted.

The first set of analyses consisted of univariate analyses. In univariate analysis, the impact of one or more independent variable on one dependent variable is assessed. Each of the dependent variables in these analyses were from a set of items that reflected Personal Problems, School Factors, and Cultural Issues. Several separate one-way analysis of variance were conducted. In analysis of variance, the sample is divided into groups on an independent variable to investigate if the means of the groups differ on the dependent variable. The strength of this statistical procedure for this study was that it allowed an indepth analysis of various variables that were hypothesized to have an impact of at-risk behavior. However, the limitation of this approach is that the variable is analyzed in isolation of the complicated context in which it actually operates in society.

Therefore, multivariate analysis was also conducted. Multivariate techniques allow for the simultaneous analysis of more than one dependent variable. In this process, the interaction of several dependent variables is examined. In this study, variables from the four areas were arranged into groups to see if they could be used to discriminate between dropouts and those who stayed in school.

## Univariate Analyses

Numerous one-way analysis of variances (ANOVA) were calculated. The dependent variables in each of these analyses were one of the variables from the list of Personal Problems, School Factors, or Cultural Issues. Personal Problems included such items as: being a teen parent, having trouble with the law, self-esteem, substance abuse, and having sexual relationships. School Factors included: skipping school, being retained in school, and being abused by a school employee. Cultural Issues related to being from a traditional/bilingual/contemporary family, cultural discontinuity, and wishing that one was not born an Indian. In this study, the participants were grouped on the following independent variables: school completion for students who drink alcohol, the structure of the Indian family, high school completion, self-esteem, peer pressure, academic achievement, teacher expectations, the cultural awareness of the teacher, skipping school, parent's educational level, pregnancy for females, sexual assaults or rape, retention in school, discrimination, sexual activity, and marijuana usage. For each of the independent variables, an ANOVA was calculated for each item in the set of dependent variables.

### Drinkers: Dropouts vs. Graduates

On the survey, respondents were asked if they had used alcohol while in high school. In addition, they were identified as either those who had graduated from high school or those who had dropped out of high school. Therefore, the sample was divided into two groups of those who drank alcohol while in high school and the group who had drank but dropped out of school. No significant differences were found in the areas of getting pregnant while in school ($F = 2.57$, $df = 1/95$, $p = .11$), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F = .68$, $df = 1/95$, $p = .41$), abused by school employee ($F = 2.96$, $df = 1/95$, $p = .09$), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F = 2.64$, $df = 1/97$, $p = .11$), sniffing or huffing ($F = 2.92$, $df = 1/97$, $p = .09$), having sexual relationships while in school ($F = .59$, $df = 1/97$, $p = .45$), playing sports ($F = 2.53$, $df = 1/99$, $p = .12$), being a traditional dancer ($F = .14$, $df = 1/99$, $p = .71$), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F = .03$, $df = 1/99$, $p = .87$), and wishing you were not born an Indian ($F = 1.45$, $df = 1/99$, $p = .23$).

However, significant differences were found on four variables (see Table 1). Those who dropped out of school skipped school much more than those who did not; on a four-point scale ranging from Frequently, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never, the dropouts indicated that they skipped much more than the graduates. Only 20% of the graduates had been retained in school while 57% of the dropouts had been held back at least one year in school. Significantly more of the dropouts (72%) smoked marijuana as compared to only 45% of the graduates who reported using the drug. While nearly 65% of the entire group had sexual relationships in school, more dropouts (73%) were sexually active than graduates (62%).

**Table 1. ANOVA of significant risk factors for graduate and dropout drinkers.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Skipping School | | | | | |
| Between | 13.157 | 1 | 13.157 | 16.694 | .001 |
| Within | 75.659 | 96 | .788 | | |
| Total | 88.816 | 97 | | | |
| Retained in School | | | | | |
| Between | 1.024 | 1 | 1.024 | 5.439 | .022 |
| Within | 18.078 | 96 | .188 | | |
| Total | 19.102 | 97 | | | |
| Smoked Marijuana | | | | | |
| Between | 1.337 | 1 | 1.337 | 5.551 | .021 |
| Within | 23.122 | 96 | .241 | | |
| Total | 24.459 | 97 | | | |
| Premature Sexual Relationships | | | | | |
| Between | .480 | 1 | .800 | 4.667 | .033 |
| Within | 10.080 | 98 | .103 | | |
| Total | 10.560 | 99 | | | |

## Structure of Indian Family

Respondents were asked to describe their family when they were growing up. The choices were (1) traditional in such ways as speaking the native language, observing the tribal culture, and respecting the traditional religion; (2) contemporary and leaning more toward the white culture; and (3) bicultural in accepting both the Indian and white cultures and in feeling comfortable in both worlds. When they were grouped by the response to this item, no significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school ($F = 1.12$, $df = 2/144$, $p = .33$), getting pregnant while in school ($F = 1.75$, $df = 2/144$, $p = .17$), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F = 1.14$, $df = 2/144$, $p = .32$), being retained in school ($F = .37$, $df = 2/144$, $p = .69$), abused by a school employee ($F = 1.61$, $df = 2/144$, $p = .31$), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F = .02$, $df = 2/148$, $p = .98$), smoking marijuana ($F = 2.71$, $df = 2/148$, $p = .07$), sniffing or huffing ($F = .33$, $df = 2/148$, $p = .72$), having sexual relationships while in school ($F = .82$, $df = 2/148$, $p = .44$), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F = 1.25$, $df = 2/148$, $p = .29$), and playing sports ($F = .40$, $df = 2/152$, $p = .67$).

However, differences were found on three variables (see Table 2). More of the traditional group (36%) were traditional or fancy dancers in pow wows than were the bicultural group (24%) or the contemporary group (10%). Closely related to this was the identity crisis expressed by the contemporary group; 52% of this group felt unsure about what it meant to be an Indian while only 22% of the traditional group and 27% of the bicultural group felt that way. Likewise, 35% of the contemporary group wished that they had not been born an Indian while only 17% of the traditional group and 16% of the bicultural group felt this way.

Table 2. **ANOVA of significant risk factors and family structure.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Participate in Traditional Culture | | | |
| Between | 1.164 | 2 | .582 | 3.276 | .040 |
| Within | 27.004 | 152 | .178 | | |
| Total | 28.168 | 154 | | | |
| | | Unsure What it Meant to be Indian | | | |
| Between | 1.717 | 2 | .858 | 4.153 | .018 |
| Within | 31.419 | 152 | .207 | | |
| Total | 33.135 | 154 | | | |
| | | Wished not Born Indian | | | |
| Between | .930 | 2 | .465 | 2.963 | .050 |
| Within | 23.870 | 152 | .157 | | |
| Total | 24.800 | 154 | | | |

## Graduates vs. Dropouts

Differences were also examined between the graduates from high school and the dropouts. Of the 156 who indicated this status, 116 were graduates and 40 were dropouts. No significant differences were found in the areas of getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F = .98$, $df = 1/151$, $p = .32$), being abused by a school employee ($F = 1.30$, $df = 1/151$, $p = .26$), smoking marijuana ($F = 3.43$, $df = 1/156$, $p = .07$), having sexual relationships while in school ($F = 1.20$, $df = 1/156$, $p = .28$), being a traditional dancer ($F = .85$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .36$), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F = .56$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .45$), and wishing you were not born an Indian ($F = .36$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .54$).

However, differences were found on seven variables (see Table 3). As when only the drinkers were considered, the dropouts skipped more school than the graduates; on the four-point scale ranging from Frequently, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never, the dropouts (1.92) indicated that they skipped more than the graduates (2.71). More dropouts (43%) were retained in school than graduates (18%). More

**Table 3. ANOVA of significant risk factors for graduates and dropouts.**

| **Source** | ***SS*** | ***df*** | ***MS*** | ***F*** | ***p*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Skipping School | | | | | |
| Between | 18.587 | 1 | 18.587 | 19.290 | .001 |
| Within | 148.387 | 154 | .964 | | |
| Total | 166.974 | 155 | | | |
| Got Pregnant | | | | | |
| Between | 1.060 | 1 | 1.060 | 9.540 | .002 |
| Within | 17.113 | 154 | .111 | | |
| Total | 18.173 | 155 | | | |
| Retained in School | | | | | |
| Between | 1.898 | 1 | 1.898 | 11.100 | .001 |
| Within | 26.327 | 154 | .171 | | |
| Total | 28.224 | 155 | | | |
| Liked Self | | | | | |
| Between | 1.611 | 1 | 1.611 | 7.585 | .007 |
| Within | 32.716 | 154 | .212 | | |
| Total | 34.327 | 155 | | | |
| Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | | | | |
| Between | .566 | 1 | .566 | 4.576 | .034 |
| Within | 19.043 | 154 | .124 | | |
| Total | 19.609 | 155 | | | |
| Sexually Assaulted/Raped | | | | | |
| Between | .680 | 1 | .680 | 8.935 | .003 |
| Within | 12.102 | 159 | .076 | | |
| Total | 12.783 | 160 | | | |
| Played Sports | | | | | |
| Between | 2.610 | 1 | 2.610 | 11.269 | .001 |
| Within | 36.819 | 159 | .232 | | |
| Total | 39.429 | 160 | | | |

of this group (27%) also got pregnant while in school than graduates (18%). In addition, the graduates had a better self-image while in school; nearly three-fourths (73%) liked the way they looked during their teen years while half (50%) of the dropout group did not like their appearance. Perhaps these self-concept indicators are related to reasons that more dropouts (25%) sniffed inhalants than graduates (11%) or that more dropouts (20%) were sexually assaulted or raped than graduates (5%). Drastic differences also existed between the two groups in relationship to school sports; 64% of the graduates indicated that they played sports while in school while only 35% of the dropouts had.

## Self-Esteem

The self-esteem of the dropout group and graduate group were each investigated. No significant differences were found between those with good self-esteem and those with low self-esteem in the dropout group: skipping school ($F$ = .90, $df$ = 1/37, $p$ = .35), getting pregnant while in school ($F$ = .39, $df$ = 1/37, $p$ = .54), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F$ = .01, $df$ = 1/37, $p$ = .92), being retained in school ($F$ = .59, $df$ = 1/37, $p$ = .45), being abused by a school employee ($F$ = .01, $df$ = 1/37, $p$ = .91), smoking marijuana ($F$ = .10, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = .76), sniffing or huffing ($F$ = .00, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = 1.00), having sexual relationships while in school ($F$ = 2.60, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = .12), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F$ = 00, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = 1.00), playing sports ($F$ = .42, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = .52), being a traditional dancer ($F$ = 1.54, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = .22), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F$ = .42, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = .52), and wishing you were not born an Indian ($F$ = 1.27, $df$ = 1/38, $p$ = .27).

Similarly, differences in only two variables were found in the graduate group (see Table 4). No significant differences were found in the areas of getting pregnant while in school ($F$ = .10, $df$ = 1/110, $p$ = .76), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F$ = 3.38, $df$ = 1/110, $p$ = .07), being retained in school ($F$ = 1.21, $df$ = 1/110, $p$ = .27), being abused by a school employee ($F$ = 2.49, $df$ = 1/110, $p$ = .18), smoking marijuana ($F$ = .18, $df$ = 1/116, $p$ = .67), sniffing or huffing ($F$ = 2.69, $df$ = 1/116, $p$ = .10), having sexual relationships while in school (*F* = .11, *df* = 1/116, *p* = .74), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school (*F* = 1.67, *df* = 1/116, *p* = .20), playing sports (*F* = 1.67, *df* = 1/117, *p* = .20), being a traditional dancer (*F* = .001, *df* = 1/117, *p* = .98), and being unsure of what it meant to be Indian (*F* = .27, *df* = 1/117, *p* = .61).

**Table 4. ANOVA of significant risk factors and self-esteem of graduates.**

| **Source** | ***SS*** | ***df*** | ***MS*** | ***F*** | ***p*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Skipping School | | |
| Between | 6.532 | 1 | 6.532 | 7.224 | .008 |
| Within | 103.080 | 114 | .904 | | |
| Total | 109.612 | 115 | | | |
| | | | Wished not Born Indian | | |
| Between | .748 | 1 | .748 | 4.989 | .027 |
| Within | 17.080 | 114 | .150 | | |
| Total | 17.828 | 115 | | | |

Significant differences were found for two variables. On the four-point scale ranging from Frequently, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never, the graduates with low self-esteem (2.33) indicated that they skipped more school than graduates with good self-esteem (2.86). More in the low self-esteem group (32%) than in the good self-esteem group (14%) wished that they had not been born an Indian.

### Peer Pressure

The respondent's reaction to peer pressure was measured by an item which asked them to describe themselves as a teenager in relationship to others. Their choices included (1) I generally did not go along with the crowd, (2) I generally went along with the crown even when I didn't want to, and (3) I never really ran around with a crowd. When divided by peer pressure, the group differed on three variables (see Table 5). No significant differences were found in the areas of getting pregnant while in school (*F* = .83, *df* = 2/148, *p* = .44), being abused by a school employee (*F* = 1.24, *df* = 2/148, *p* = .29), liking the way you looked as a teenager

($F = 1.73$, $df = 2/151$, $p = .18$), smoking marijuana ($F = 1.01$, $df = 2/151$, $p = .35$), sniffing or huffing ($F = 2.20$, $df = 2/151$, $p = .11$), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F = 2.52$, $df = 2/151$, $p = .08$), playing sports ($F = 1.72$, $df = 2/155$, $p = .18$), being a traditional dancer ($F = .87$, $df = 2/155$, $p = .42$), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F = 1.13$, $df = 2/155$, $p = .33$), and wishing you were not born an Indian ($F = 1.75$, $df = 2/155$, $p = .18$).

**Table 5. ANOVA of significant risk factors and peer pressure.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Skipping School | | |
| Between | 8.478 | 2 | 4.239 | 4.051 | .019 |
| Within | 158.015 | 151 | 1.046 | | |
| Total | 166.494 | 153 | | | |
| | | | Trouble with the Law | | |
| Between | 1.929 | 2 | .964 | 5.456 | .005 |
| Within | 26.694 | 151 | .177 | | |
| Total | 28.623 | 153 | | | |
| | | | Premature Sexual Relationships | | |
| Between | 1.417 | 2 | .709 | 2.890 | .050 |
| Within | 37.024 | 151 | .245 | | |
| Total | 38.442 | 153 | | | |

However, like several other analyses, the groups differed in relationship to skipping school. On the four-point scale ranging from Frequently, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never, the group that went along with the crowd (2.23) skipped more school than those that never ran with the crowd (2.61) and those that did not go along with the crowd (2.79). Those that never ran with the crowd (10%) got in less trouble with the law than those who did not go along with the crowd (27%) and those that went along with the crowd (36%). Those that went along with the crowd (59%) were more sexually active than those who never ran with the crowd (45%) and those who did not go along with the crowd (36%).

## Academic Achievement

The respondents were grouped according to their level of academic achievement. The three groupings were (1) above average with mostly A's and B's, (2) average with mostly B's and C's, and (3) below average with D's and below. Differences were found in four areas (see Table 6). No significant differences were found in the areas of getting pregnant while in school (*F* = .26, *df* = 2/148, *p* = .77), getting in trouble with the law while in high school (*F* = 2.31, *df* = 2/148, *p* = .10), being abused by a school employee (*F* = .31, *df* = 2/148, *p* = .74), liking the way you looked as a teenager (*F* = 2.02, *df* = 2/153, *p* = .14), smoking marijuana (*F* = .11, *df* = 2/153, *p* = .90), having sexual relationships while in school (*F* = .75, *df* = 2/153, *p* = .48), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school (*F* = .49, *df* = 2/153, *p* = .62), playing sports (*F* = 2.67, *df* = 2/157, *p* = .07), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian (*F* = 2.23, *df* = 2/157, *p* = .11), and wishing you were not born an Indian (*F* = 1.30, *df* = 2/157, *p* = .28).

**Table 6. ANOVA of significant risk factors and academic achievement.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Skipping School | | | | | |
| Between | 9.926 | 2 | 4.963 | 4.839 | .009 |
| Within | 156.914 | 153 | 1.026 | | |
| Total | 166.840 | 155 | | | |
| Retained in School | | | | | |
| Between | 1.545 | 2 | .773 | 4.618 | .011 |
| Within | 25.602 | 153 | .167 | | |
| Total | 27.147 | 155 | | | |
| Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | | | | |
| Between | .863 | 2 | .431 | 3.522 | .032 |
| Within | 18.746 | 153 | .123 | | |
| Total | 19.609 | 155 | | | |
| Participate in Traditional Culture | | | | | |
| Between | 1.750 | 2 | .875 | 5.058 | .007 |
| Within | 26.474 | 153 | .173 | | |
| Total | 28.224 | 155 | | | |

However, the three groups differed in the amount of school they skipped. On the four-point scale ranging from Frequently, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never, the lowest group in academic achievement (1.62) skipped more school that the highest academic group (2.78) and the average academic group (2.48). While 50% of the low academic group had been held back at least one year in school, only 10% of the highest academic group and 26% of the average group had been retained. Although sniffing inhalants is not widespread among Indian people, 38% of the low academic group had used inhalants while only 6% of the high academic group and 18% of the average group had. More of the lowest academic group (48%) participated as a traditional or fancy dancer than the average academic group (19%) or the highest academic group (38%).

### Teacher Expectations

Much literature in the field of education addresses the issue of teacher expectations for students. The respondents in this study were asked to indicate if their teachers set high expectations for them to succeed in school. When divided between those whose teachers set high expectations and those whose teachers did not, differences were found on seven variables (see Table 7). No significant differences were found in the areas of getting pregnant while in school ($F = 1.10$, $df = 1/151$, $p = .30$), being retained in school ($F = 3.51$, $df = 1/151$, $p = .06$), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F = 3.28$, $df = 1/156$, $p = .07$), smoking marijuana ($F = .61$, $df = 1/156$, $p = .44$), being a traditional dancer ($F = 2.57$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .11$), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F = 1.69$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .20$), and wishing you were not born an Indian ($F = .45$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .50$).

However, significant differences were found for several variables. On the four-point scale ranging from Frequently, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never, the group that had lower teacher expectations (2.32) skipped more school than those that had teachers with high expectations (2.67). Those with low teacher expectations (32%) got in more trouble with the law more than those with high teacher expectations (18%). More of those with low teacher expectations (42%) were abused by school employees than those with high teacher expectations (17%). Low teacher expectations (24%) were also associated more with inhalant use than high teacher expectation (6%) was. Those with low teacher expectations (58%) were more

Table 7. ANOVA of significant risk factors and teacher expectations.

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Skipping School | | | | | |
| Between | 4.595 | 1 | 4.595 | 4.346 | .039 |
| Within | 159.653 | 151 | 1.057 | | |
| Total | 164.248 | 152 | | | |
| Trouble with the Law | | | | | |
| Between | .755 | 1 | .755 | 4.099 | .045 |
| Within | 27.807 | 151 | .184 | | |
| Total | 28.562 | 152 | | | |
| Abused by School Employees | | | | | |
| Between | 2.326 | 1 | 2.326 | 12.105 | .001 |
| Within | 29.020 | 151 | .192 | | |
| Total | 31.346 | 152 | | | |
| Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | | | | |
| Between | 1.183 | 1 | 1.183 | 9.730 | .002 |
| Within | 18.359 | 151 | .122 | | |
| Total | 19.542 | 152 | | | |
| Premature Sexual Relationships | | | | | |
| Between | .863 | 1 | .863 | 3.487 | .064 |
| Within | 37.385 | 151 | .248 | | |
| Total | 38.248 | 152 | | | |
| Sexually Assaulted/Raped | | | | | |
| Between | .424 | 1 | .424 | 5.455 | .021 |
| Within | 12.359 | 159 | .078 | | |
| Total | 12.783 | 160 | | | |
| Played Sports | | | | | |
| Between | 2.078 | 1 | 2.078 | 8.844 | .003 |
| Within | 37.351 | 159 | .235 | | |
| Total | 39.429 | 160 | | | |

sexually active than those with high teacher expectations (43%). More of those with low teacher expectations (14%) were sexually assaulted or raped than those with high teacher expectations (4%). Finally, those with high teacher expectations (68%) were more involved in school sports than those with low teacher expectations (45%). Thus, teacher expectations is significantly related to a wide variety of student factors.

### Teacher's Cultural Awareness

Respondents were also asked if their teachers were sensitive to their Indian culture. The choices were (1) mostly no, (2) very few, and (3) mostly yes. Differences were found in five areas (see Table 8). No significant differences were found in the areas of getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F = .26$, $df = 2/111$, $p = .78$), being retained in school ($F = 1.13$, $df = 2/111$, $p = .33$), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F = 2.36$, $df = 2/116$, $p = .10$), smoking marijuana ($F = .07$, $df = 2/116$, $p = .93$), sniffing or huffing ($F = .70$, $df = 2/116$, $p = .50$), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F = 1.53$, $df = 2/116$, $p = .22$), playing sports ($F = 2.22$, $df = 2/117$, $p = .11$), being a traditional dancer ($F = .96$, $df = 2/117$, $p = .39$), and being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F = 1.88$, $df = 2/117$, $p = .16$).

As with so many other independent variables, a difference was found in the amount of school skipped. Those with the teachers who were sensitive to the Indian culture (2.75) skipped less school than those for whom most of their teachers (2.22) or very few (2.66) were sensitive. None of the students with sensitive teachers got pregnant while in school while 20% of those with mostly insensitive teachers and 19% with very few sensitive teacher indicated they got pregnant while in school. Almost none of the group with sensitive teachers (4%) were abused by school employees while 28% of those with very few sensitive teachers and 42% with mostly insensitive teachers were abused. Those with insensitive teachers (66%) and those with very few sensitive teachers (47%) were more sexually active than those with sensitive teachers (28%). More of those students with mostly insensitive teachers (32%) wished they had not been born an Indian than those with very few (15%) or mostly sensitive (11%) teachers.

Table 8. ANOVA of significant risk factors and teacher's cultural awareness.

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Skipping School | | |
| Between | 5.821 | 2 | 2.910 | 3.087 | .050 |
| Within | 104.644 | 111 | .943 | | |
| Total | 110.465 | 113 | | | |
| | | | Got Pregnant | | |
| Between | .762 | 2 | .381 | 3.178 | .045 |
| Within | 13.789 | 115 | .120 | | |
| Total | 14.551 | 117 | | | |
| | | | Abused by School Employee | | |
| Between | 2.828 | 2 | 1.414 | 8.142 | .001 |
| Within | 19.277 | 111 | .174 | | |
| Total | 22.105 | 113 | | | |
| | | | Premature Sexual Relationships | | |
| Between | 2.333 | 2 | 1.166 | 4.938 | .009 |
| Within | 27.398 | 116 | .236 | | |
| Total | 29.731 | 118 | | | |
| | | | Wished not Born Indian | | |
| Between | .977 | 2 | .489 | 3.039 | .052 |
| Within | 18.814 | 117 | .161 | | |
| Total | 19.792 | 119 | | | |

### Skipping School

In addition to using the frequency of skipping school as a dependent variable, it was also used as an independent variable. The four groupings for rate of skipping school were (1) frequently, (2) sometimes, (3) seldom, and (4) never. The groups differed on six variables (see Table 9). No significant differences were found in the areas of getting pregnant while in school ($F$ = .57, $df$ = 3/149, $p$ = .63), being abused by a school employee ($F$ = 1.01, $df$ = 3/149, $p$ = .37), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F$ = 1.18, $df$ = 3/151, $p$ = .32), playing sports

(*F* = 1.11, *df* = 3/154, *p* = .35), being a traditional dancer (*F* = .37, *df* = 3/154, *p* = .78), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian (*F* = 1.73, *df* = 3/154, *p* = .16), and wishing you were not born an Indian (*F* = .82, *df* = 3/154, *p* = .48).

**Table 9. ANOVA of significant risk factors and skipping school.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Trouble with the Law | | |
| Between | 2.195 | 1 | 2.195 | 18.017 | .001 |
| Within | 7.555 | 62 | .122 | | |
| Total | 9.750 | 63 | | | |
| | | | Retained in School | | |
| Between | 2.135 | 1 | 2.135 | 14.162 | .001 |
| Within | 9.349 | 62 | .151 | | |
| Total | 11.484 | 63 | | | |
| | | | Liked Self | | |
| Between | 1.623 | 1 | 1.623 | 9.266 | .003 |
| Within | 10.861 | 62 | .175 | | |
| Total | 12.484 | 63 | | | |
| | | | Smoked Marijuana | | |
| Between | 3.491 | 1 | 3.491 | 21.932 | .001 |
| Within | 9.869 | 62 | .159 | | |
| Total | 13.360 | 63 | | | |
| | | | Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | |
| Between | 1.541 | 1 | 1.541 | 15.431 | .001 |
| Within | 6.193 | 62 | .100 | | |
| Total | 7.734 | 63 | | | |
| | | | Premature Sexual Relationships | | |
| Between | 1.367 | 1 | 1.367 | 6.255 | .015 |
| Within | 13.771 | 63 | .219 | | |
| Total | 15.138 | 64 | | | |

The groups that frequently (43%) and seldom (47%) skipped school got in trouble with the law more than the group that sometimes (23%) and the group that never (5%) skipped school. The group that frequently (47%) skipped school had the most students who had been held back a year in school, and the group that sometimes (28%) skipped had the second largest group. Those that seldom (5%) and never (9%) skipped school had very few who had ever been retained in school. About half of those who frequently (52%) and sometimes (58%) skipped school liked the way they looked as teenagers; however, most of those who seldom (79%) and never (85%) skipped school were satisfied with their appearance. Those who frequently (61%) skipped school smoked marijuana much more than those who sometimes (39%), seldom (25%), or never (12%) skipped. Likewise, those who frequently (35%) skipped school used inhalants more than those who sometimes (17%), seldom (11%), or never (3%) skipped. Those who frequently (57%), sometimes (60%), or seldom (48%) were more sexually active than those who never (26%) skipped school.

## Parent's Educational Level

When the respondents were grouped according to whether their father was a high school dropout, differences were found on three variables (see Table 10). No significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school ($F = .21$, $df = 1/150$, $p = .65$), getting pregnant while in school ($F = 2.58$, $df = 1/150$, $p = .11$), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F = 2.03$, $df = 1/150$, $p = .16$), being retained in school ($F = 3.13$, $df = 1/150$, $p = .08$), being abused by a school employee ($F = .08$, $df = 1/150$, $p = .78$), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F = .16$, $df = 1/154$, $p = .69$), smoking marijuana ($F = .81$, $df = 1/153$, $p = .37$), sniffing or huffing ($F = 1.22$, $df = 1/154$, $p = .27$), having sexual relationships while in school ($F = .24$, $df = 1/154$, $p = .63$), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F = .009$, $df = 1/154$, $p = .93$), and playing sports ($F = 3.16$, $df = 1/158$, $p = .08$).

Traditional qualities were associated with students whose father had graduated from high school. More students whose father had graduated (33%) were traditional dancers than students whose fathers had dropped out (16%). More students whose father had dropped out (38%) were unsure of what it meant to be an Indian than students whose father had graduated (22%). Likewise, more students whose father had dropped out (25%) wished they had not been born an Indian than those whose father had graduated (12%) from high school.

**Table 10. ANOVA of significant risk factors and father's educational level.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Participate in Traditional Culture | | |
| Between | 1.171 | 1 | 1.171 | 6.782 | .010 |
| Within | 27.273 | 158 | .173 | | |
| Total | 28.444 | 159 | | | |
| | | | Unsure What it Meant to be Indian | | |
| Between | .995 | 1 | .995 | 4.766 | .031 |
| Within | 32.998 | 158 | .209 | | |
| Total | 33.993 | 159 | | | |
| | | | Wished not Born Indian | | |
| Between | .591 | 1 | .591 | 3.827 | .052 |
| Within | 24.403 | 158 | .154 | | |
| Total | 24.994 | 159 | | | |

The respondents were also grouped according to whether their mother had graduated from high school. A difference was found on only one variable (see Table 11). As with those whose father had graduated, more students whose mother had graduated (33%) were involved as traditional dancers than those whose mother had not graduated (13%). No significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school (*F* = .10, *df* = 1/148, *p* = .75), getting pregnant while in school (*F* = .49, *df* = 1/148, *p* = .50), getting in trouble with the law while in high school (*F* = .08, *df* = 1/148, *p* = .78), being retained in school (*F* = 2.71, *df* = 1/148, *p* = .10), being abused by a school employee (*F* = .90, *df* = 1/148, *p* = .34), liking the way you looked as a teenager (*F* = .08, *df* = 1/153, *p* = .78), smoking marijuana (*F* = .33, *df* = 1/153, *p* = .56), sniffing or huffing (*F* = .83, *df* = 1/153, *p* = .34), having sexual relationships while in school (*F* = .76, *df* = 1/153,

$p$ = .39), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F$ = .03, $df$ = 1/153, $p$ = .86), playing sports ($F$ = 2.44, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .12), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F$ = .53, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .47), and wishing you were not born an Indian ($F$ = 1.55, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .22).

**Table 11. ANOVA of participation in traditional culture and mother's educational level.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between | 1.634 | 1 | 1.634 | 9.547 | .002 |
| Within | 26.701 | 156 | .171 | | |
| Total | 28.335 | 157 | | | |

### Pregnancy

The females were divided into those who got pregnant while in high school and those who did not. Of the 95 females responding to this item, 20 indicated they had gotten pregnant during that time. Differences were found on four variables (see Table 12). No significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school ($F$ = 1.60, $df$ = 1/90, $p$ = .21), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F$ = .04, $df$ = 1/90, $p$ = .84), being retained in school ($F$ = 1.20, $df$ = 1/90, $p$ = .28), being abused by a school employee ($F$ = .75, $df$ = 1/90, $p$ = .39), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F$ = 1.76, $df$ = 1/93, $p$ = .19), smoking marijuana ($F$ = 1.34, $df$ = 1/93, $p$ = .25), sniffing or huffing ($F$ = 3.32, $df$ = 1/93, $p$ = .07), playing sports ($F$ = 2.57, $df$ = 1/94, $p$ = .11), and being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F$ = 1.76, $df$ = 1/94, $p$ = .19).

Not surprisingly, those who got pregnant were more sexually active (75%) than those who were less sexually active (32%). Likewise, those who got pregnant (35%) had been sexually assaulted or raped more than those who did not get pregnant (7%). None of those who had gotten pregnant were traditional dancers while 27% of those who did not get pregnant participated in traditional dancing. More of those who had gotten pregnant (35%) wished that they had not been born an Indian than those who did not get pregnant (11%).

Table 12. ANOVA of significant risk factors for females and pregnancy.

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Premature Sexual Relationships | | | | | |
| Between | 2.919 | 1 | 2.919 | 13.528 | .001 |
| Within | 20.070 | 93 | .216 | | |
| Total | 22.989 | 94 | | | |
| Sexually Assaulted/Raped | | | | | |
| Between | 1.268 | 1 | 1.268 | 12.790 | .001 |
| Within | 9.217 | 93 | .099 | | |
| Total | 10.485 | 94 | | | |
| Participate in Traditional Culture | | | | | |
| Between | 1.123 | 1 | 1.123 | 7.120 | .009 |
| Within | 14.667 | 93 | .158 | | |
| Total | 15.790 | 94 | | | |
| Wished not Born Indian | | | | | |
| Between | .935 | 1 | .935 | 7.433 | .008 |
| Within | 11.697 | 93 | .126 | | |
| Total | 12.632 | 94 | | | |

### Sexual Assaults

Fourteen respondents from the total group indicated that they had been sexually assaulted or raped while in school. This group differed from the other respondents on three variables (see Table 13). Nearly four-fifths (79%) of this group had been abused by school employees as compared to 24% of the other group. They (36%) also used inhalants more than the other group (13%). They (86%) also were more sexually active than the other group (48%). No significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school ($F = .10$, $df = 1/150$, $p = .75$), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F = .32$, $df = 1/150$, $p = .58$), being retained in school ($F = .00$, $df = 1/150$, $p = 1.00$), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F = 2.03$, $df = 1/156$, $p = .16$), smoking marijuana ($F = 3.19$, $df = 1/156$, $p = .09$), being a traditional dancer ($F = 2.18$, $df = 1/159$, $p = .14$), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian (*F* = 1.24, *df* = 1/159, *p* = .27), and wishing you were not born an Indian (*F* = 2.68, *df* = 1/159, *p* = .10).

**Table 13. ANOVA of significant risk factors and sexual assault or rape.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abused by School Employee | | | | | |
| Between | 3.829 | 1 | 3.829 | 20.990 | .001 |
| Within | 28.273 | 155 | .182 | | |
| Total | 32.102 | 156 | | | |
| Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | | | | |
| Between | .682 | 1 | .682 | 5.579 | .019 |
| Within | 18.949 | 155 | .122 | | |
| Total | 19.631 | 156 | | | |
| Premature Sexual Relationships | | | | | |
| Between | 1.857 | 1 | 1.857 | 7.701 | .006 |
| Within | 37.379 | 155 | .241 | | |
| Total | 39.236 | 156 | | | |

### Retention in School

Those who had been held back a year in school differed from those who had not been retained on two variables (see Table 14). These 36 individuals got in more trouble with the law (42% vs 19%) and used inhalants (34% vs 9%) more than those who had not been retained. No significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school (*F* = .35, *df* = 1/151, *p* = .55), getting pregnant while in school (*F* = .06, *df* = 1/151, *p* = .81), being abused by a school employee (*F* = .16, *df* = 1/151, *p* = .69), liking the way you looked as a teenager (*F* = .22, *df* = 1/156, *p* = .64), smoking marijuana (*F* = .54, *df* = 1/156, *p* = .46), having sexual relationships while in school (*F* = 3.19, *df* = 1/156, *p* = .08), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school (*F* = 1.54, *df* = 1/158, *p* = .22), playing sports (*F* = 1.54, *df* = 1/158, *p* = .22), being a traditional dancer (*F* = .47, *df* = 1/158, *p* = .49), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian (*F* = .13, *df* = 1/158, *p* = .72) , and wishing you were not born an Indian (*F* = .15, *df* = 1/158, *p* = .70).

**Table 14. ANOVA of significant risk factors and retention in school.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Trouble with the Law | | |
| Between | 1.447 | 1 | 1.447 | 8.233 | .005 |
| Within | 27.414 | 156 | .176 | | |
| Total | 28.861 | 157 | | | |
| | | | Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | |
| Between | 1.644 | 1 | 1.644 | 14.239 | .001 |
| Within | 18.008 | 156 | .115 | | |
| Total | 19.652 | 157 | | | |

**Discrimination**

Three-fourths of the respondents indicated that they felt they had been discriminated against because they are Indian. Those who have felt this discrimination differed from those who have not on two variables (see Table 15). On the four-point scale ranging from Frequently, Sometimes, Seldom, and Never, the group that has experienced the discrimination skipped less school than the group that has not been subject to the discrimination. The group being discriminated against (26%) also has more members who have wished that they had not been born an Indian than the group without discrimination (3%). No significant differences were found in the areas of getting pregnant while in school ($F$ = .24, $df$ = 1/151, $p$ = .62), getting in trouble with the law while in high school ($F$ = .09, $df$ = 1/151, $p$ = .77), being retained in school ($F$ = .71, $df$ = 1/151, $p$ = .40), being abused by a school employee ($F$ = 1.73, $df$ = 1/151, $p$ = .19), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F$ = .004, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .95), smoking marijuana ($F$ = .005, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .95), sniffing or huffing ($F$ = .03, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .87), having sexual relationships while in school ($F$ = 2.77, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .10), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school ($F$ = .09, $df$ = 1/156, $p$ = .77), playing sports ($F$ = .002, $df$ = 1/160, $p$ = .97), being a traditional dancer ($F$ = .06, $df$ = 1/160, $p$ = .80), and being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F$ = 3.40, $df$ = 1/160, $p$ = .07).

Table 15. ANOVA of significant risk factors and discrimination.

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Skipping School | | |
| Between | 5.613 | 1 | 5.613 | 4.405 | .037 |
| Within | 198.767 | 156 | 1.274 | | |
| Total | 204.380 | 157 | | | |
| | | | Wished not Born Indian | | |
| Between | 1.570 | 1 | 1.570 | 10.489 | .001 |
| Within | 23.348 | 156 | .150 | | |
| Total | 24.918 | 157 | | | |

### Sexual Relationships

Approximately half of the group indicated that they had sexual relationships while in school. When categorized on this variable, the group differed on six factors (see Table 16). No significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school ($F = 3.63$, $df = 1/151$, $p = .06$), being retained in school ($F = 3.18$, $df = 1/151$, $p = .08$), liking the way you looked as a teenager ($F = 1.83$, $df = 1/156$, $p = .18$), playing sports ($F = .37$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .54$), being a traditional dancer ($F = .72$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .40$), being unsure of what it meant to be Indian ($F = .38$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .54$), and wishing you were not born an Indian ($F = 2,18$, $df = 1/160$, $p = .14$). Some of those who were sexually active in school got pregnant (19%). More of those who were sexually active got in trouble with the law (35% vs 13%), were abused by school employees (39% vs 17%), smoked marijuana (51% vs 20%), used inhalants (22% vs 8%), and were sexually assaulted or raped (15% vs 3%).

### Marijuana Usage

Slightly over one-third (37%) indicated that they had smoked marijuana while in school. Those who used marijuana differed from those who did not on five

**Table 16. ANOVA of significant risk factors and sexual activity.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Got Pregnant | | | | | |
| Between | .489 | 1 | .489 | 4.256 | .041 |
| Within | 17.684 | 154 | .115 | | |
| Total | 18.173 | 155 | | | |
| Trouble with the Law | | | | | |
| Between | 1.966 | 1 | 1.966 | 11.309 | .001 |
| Within | 26.777 | 154 | .174 | | |
| Total | 28.744 | 155 | | | |
| Abused by School Employee | | | | | |
| Between | 1.949 | 1 | 1.949 | 10.127 | .002 |
| Within | 29.641 | 154 | .192 | | |
| Total | 31.590 | 155 | | | |
| Premature Sexual Relationships | | | | | |
| Between | 3.776 | 1 | 3.776 | 17.951 | .001 |
| Within | 32.397 | 154 | .210 | | |
| Total | 36.173 | 155 | | | |
| Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | | | | |
| Between | .735 | 1 | .735 | 5.995 | .015 |
| Within | 18.874 | 154 | .123 | | |
| Total | 19.609 | 155 | | | |
| Sexually Assaulted/Raped | | | | | |
| Between | .632 | 1 | .632 | 8.270 | .005 |
| Within | 12.151 | 159 | .076 | | |
| Total | 12.783 | 160 | | | |

variables (see Table 17). Those who smoked marijuana got in more trouble with the law (41% vs 14%), used inhalants more (32% vs 3%), were more sexually active (71% vs 38%), were more unsure of what it meant to be Indian (45% vs 23%), and wished that they had not been born an Indian (30% vs 14%). No significant differences were found in the areas of skipping school ($F$ = .005, $df$ = 1/151, *p* = .94), getting pregnant while in school (*F* = .69, *df* = 1/151, *p* = .41), being retained in school (*F* = .22, *df* = 1/151, *p* = .64), being abused by a school employee (*F* = 1.15, *df* = 1/151, *p* = .29), liking the way you looked as a teenager (*F* = .82, *df* = 1/156, *p* = .37), being sexually assaulted or raped while in school (*F* = 3.19, *df* = 1/156, *p* = .08), playing sports (*F* = .32, *df* = 1/160, *p* = .58), and being a traditional dancer (*F* = .009, *df* = 1/160, *p* = .92).

**Table 17. ANOVA of significant risk factors and marijuana usage.**

| Source | *SS* | *df* | *MS* | *F* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trouble with the Law | | | | | |
| Between | 2.790 | 1 | 2.790 | 16.764 | .001 |
| Within | 26.128 | 157 | .166 | | |
| Total | 28.918 | 158 | | | |
| Sniffed or Huffed Inhalants | | | | | |
| Between | 3.056 | 1 | 3.056 | 28.868 | .001 |
| Within | 16.617 | 157 | .106 | | |
| Total | 19.673 | 158 | | | |
| Premature Sexual Relationships | | | | | |
| Between | 4.028 | 1 | 4.028 | 17.705 | .001 |
| Within | 35.720 | 157 | .228 | | |
| Total | 39.748 | 158 | | | |
| Unsure What it Meant to be Indian | | | | | |
| Between | 1.792 | 1 | 1.792 | 8.763 | .004 |
| Within | 32.107 | 157 | .205 | | |
| Total | 33.899 | 158 | | | |
| Wished not Born Indian | | | | | |
| Between | .879 | 1 | .879 | 5.734 | .018 |
| Within | 24.077 | 157 | .153 | | |
| Total | 24.956 | 158 | | | |

## Multivariate Analysis

Discriminant analysis is a statistical technique which allows the investigation of the differences between two or more groups in relationship to several variables simultaneously. In discriminant analysis as with other multivariate techniques, the emphasis is upon analyzing the variables together rather than singly. In this way, the interaction of multiple variables can be considered.

Discriminant analysis can be used either to describe the way groups differ or to predict membership in a group. In this study, discriminant analysis was used to describe the combination of variables that could be used to distinguish the dropouts from the high school graduates. Thus, for purposes of analysis, the 165 respondents were placed in two groups. One group of 40 contained individuals who had dropped out of high school; this included those who had later returned to complete a GED. The other group of 125 was made up of those who had graduated from high school.

Two criteria were used for judging the hypothesis that it is possible to discriminate between high school graduates and dropouts using variables related to Personal Problems, Social Factors, Family Factors, and Cultural Issues. The first criterion was that the discriminant function produced by the analysis had to be describable using the structure coefficients with a value of .3 or greater. The second criterion was that the discriminant function had to correctly classify at least 75% of the cases in the analysis.

The first criterion was necessary because the formula for discriminant analysis produces a discriminant function regardless of whether the function is meaningful. The structure matrix contains the coefficients which show the similarity between each individual variable and the overall discriminant function. If several of the variables do not have a coefficient of at least .3, it is impossible to discern the meaning of the function. In analyses which use a large number of variables, it is possible to get functions which have high predictive ability but which correlate with so many of the variables that it is impossible to decipher the meaning of the function. Therefore, this criterion places a logical restriction on the interpretation of the statistical output which requires that it must have clarity in order to be used to support the hypothesis.

The second criterion demands that the discriminant function account for a significant amount of variance before it can be used to support the hypothesis. Since the analysis contained two groups, the percentage of correct classification of cases into a group if placements were made randomly was 50%. The criterion level of 75% is a 25% increase over a chance assignment. Thus, in order for the discriminant function to be acceptable, it had to account for at least one-half of the variance available over a chance assignment of individuals to a group.

Together these two criteria require that the results of a discriminant analysis be meaningful before they can be used to support the hypothesis. Analyses which use a large number of variables can produce functions which have high classification percentages but which offer no clear descriptive power. On the other hand, some analyses produce functions which can be clearly described but which have low classification power. Therefore, in combination these two criteria require that the function be both clearly descriptive and highly accurate in order to be used to support the hypothesis.

For purposes of the discriminant analysis, the respondents were divided into the dropout group and the high school graduate group. The set of discriminating variables used to predict placement in these groups consisted of Personal Problems, School Factors, Family Factors, and Cultural Issues. The area of Personal Problems contained items dealing with substance abuse, peer pressure, trouble with the law, self-esteem, and teen pregnancy. The area of School Factors was made up of academic achievement, teacher attitudes, teacher expectations, school attendance, abuse by school employees, teacher prejudice, and being retained a grade in school. Family Factors included family composition, socioeconomic status, parental educational level, graduation status of older siblings, bilingualism, and substance abuse. Cultural Issues related to tribal self-identification and pride, and experienced level of discrimination and racism. The analysis contained a total of 23 separate variables: Personal Problems--5, School Factors--7, Family Factors--7, and Cultural Issues--4.

The pooled within-groups correlations are the correlations for the variables with the respondents placed in their groups of either dropouts or graduates. The pooled within-groups correlation matrix of discriminating variables was examined because interdependencies among variables is important in most multivariate analyses. That is, in order for multiple variables to be included in an analysis, they should not be sharing variance; a high correlation indicates that variables are indeed accounting for the same variance. The within-groups matrix reveals how the discriminant function is related to the variables within each group in the analysis. The examination of the 253 coefficients in this analysis showed that all were at a sufficiently weak level to retain the variables in the analysis. Only 1 coefficient was at the .5 level; 5 were at the .2 level; 21 were at the .2 level; and the remaining 226 were all below the .2 level. Thus, the variables in this discriminant analysis were not related to each other and consequently were not sharing a common variance.

Stepwise selection was used to determine which variables added most to the discrimination between the dropouts and the graduates. Stepwise procedures produce an optimal set of discriminating variables. Although there are various methods of selecting variables for inclusion in the discriminant analysis, Wilk's lambda was chosen for this analysis because it takes into consideration both the differences between the groups and the cohesiveness within the groups. Because of its approach to variable selection, Wilk's lambda is commonly used in discriminant analysis studies in education. As a result of this stepwise procedure, 12 variables were included in the discriminant function. The following discriminating variables and their corresponding Wilk's lambda values were selected: Skipping school--.93; Socioeconomic status when growing up--.87; Used alcohol in school--.86; Older sibling dropped out of school--.83; Liked way looked as a teen--.81; Got pregnant while in school--.79; Had teachers sensitive to the Indian culture--.77; Had teachers prejudiced toward Indian people--.76; Retained or held back a year in school--.75; Drinker in home resulted in lack of rest--.74; Peer relationships--.74; and Academic achievement level--.73. The other 11 variables included in the analysis did not account for enough variance to be included in the discriminant function.

Standardized discriminant function coefficients are used to determine which variables contribute most to the discrimination between the groups. By examining the standardized coefficients, the relative importance of each variable to the overall discriminant function can be determined. The standardized coefficients for this function which discriminated the dropouts from the graduates were as follows: Skipping school (-.51); Liked way looked as a teen (.41); Got pregnant while in school (-.41); Socioeconomic status when growing up (.40); Used alcohol in school (.39); Older sibling dropped out of school (-.34); Had teachers sensitive to the Indian culture (.27); Retained or held back a year in school (-.26); Alcoholic abusing parents (.23); teachers who were prejudiced toward Indian students (.22); Peer relationships (.20); and Academic achievement level (.18). Thus, skipping school, self-esteem, pregnancy, socioeconomic status, and using alcohol contributed about twice as much as the other variables in discriminating between dropouts and graduates.

The structure matrix contains the coefficients which show the similarity between each individual variable and the total discriminate function. The variables with the highest coefficients have the strongest relationship to the discriminant function. These coefficients are used to name the discriminant function because they show how closely the variable and the overall discriminant function are related. In a study such as this in which the discriminant analysis is used for descriptive purposes, this is the most important information related to discriminant functions which satisfy the acceptance criteria. This elevated importance stems from the fact that interpreting the structure matrix results in naming the process that distinguishes the groups from each other. Since the overall purpose of discriminant analysis is to describe the phenomenon that discriminates the groups from each other, this logical process of giving meaning to the discriminant function by interpreting the structure matrix is central and critical to the whole process. In this interpreting process, variables with coefficients of approximately .3 and above are generally included in the interpretation.

Four variables had sufficient coefficients to be included in the interpretation of the meaning of the discriminant function. They were as follows: Skipping school (-.45), Liked self as a teen (.40), Socioeconomic status when growing up (.39), and Retained or held back a year in school (-.29). Since the coefficients for all four variables were similar, they carried equal weight in naming the discriminant function.

Based on the strength of these variables, this discriminant function was named ALIENATION. Alienation will be discussed at length in Chapter 6.

The percentage of cases correctly classified shows how accurate the discriminant function was in grouping the respondents. This discriminant function was 79.4% accurate in classifying cases. It correctly placed 100 (80%) in the high school graduate group and 31 (77.5%) in the dropout group. Thus, the discriminant function is a 29.4% improvement over chance in predicting group placement. Consequently, it demonstrates that high school graduates and dropouts can be distinguished on the basis of demographic factors.

The discriminant function which was used to classify the cases and which can serve as guide for predicting future placement of respondents into these groups was as follows:

> D = .53 (Socioeconomic status when growing up) - .47 (Skipping school) + .76 (Used alcohol in school) - .67 (Older sibling dropped out of school) + .82 (Liked way looked as a teen) - .98 (Got pregnant while in school) + .23 (Had teachers sensitive to the Indian culture) + .48 (Had teachers prejudiced toward Indian people) - .54 (Retained or held back a year in school) + .47 (Drinker in home resulted in lack of rest) + .22 (Peer relationships) + .31 (Academic achievement level) - 1.23.

The group centroid for the high school graduate group was -.34, and it was 1.06 for the dropout group. The canonical correlation is a measure of the degree of association between the discriminant scores and the groups and was .52 for this study. When this is squared, it indicates that the groups explain 27% of the variation in the discriminant function.

Thus, a discriminant analysis was calculated to test the hypothesis that it was possible to use a variety of variables related to Personal Problems, School Factors, Family Factors, and Cultural Issues to discriminate between high school graduates and dropouts. Because a recognizable discriminant function was produced which was accurate in classifying respondents into the correct group and which explains a substantial amount of variance, the hypothesis is accepted.

## Interviews

Seventy-six of the graduates and 37 of the dropouts participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. The purpose of the interviews was to gain further insight into the reasons why students dropped out or graduated.

As with the statistical analysis, a pattern of poverty and teacher/school alienation emerged for the dropouts. For the graduates, a strong functional family with high expectations for graduation emerged. In addition, graduates had a good self-image and realized that an education was necessary for a good job.

Clearly, school is not a positive environment for those students who dropped out and it would appear that poverty interacts in their lives and their parents lives to the degree that there is little encouragement coming from the home. Although school is not always pleasant for graduates and many of them reported teachers and the school environment in a very negative manner, graduates seem to overcome these problems by having a family that sets high expectations and reinforces the importance of an education.

# Chapter 6

## What Do the Findings Mean?

The purpose of this study was twofold:

- To identify the factors of high school success (graduation)
- To identify the factors that lead to failure (dropping out)

For the purposes of analysis, frequency distributions, one way analysis of variance (ANOVAS), and discriminate analysis were conducted. This chapter will discuss the results of the study.

Interviews were also conducted which provided even further credence to the results of the statistical analysis. Although researchers in the past have often used interviews as an important source of information about dropouts, there has been a tendency to treat this information as less important. In this study, the interviews validated the results of the questionnaire and demonstrated a clear trend between what was reported on the questionnaire and what the participants actually said.

### Univariate Analyses

Numerous one-way analysis of variances were calculated. The dependent variables in each of these analyses were one of the variables from the list of Personal Factors, School Factors, or Cultural Factors. The results showed that skipping school, low self-esteem, teacher expectations and attitudes, and grade retention were significant for dropouts. Throughout the study, using various means of analyses, these four variables surfaced again and again.

### Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is something everyone needs. It increases our chances of happiness and enables us to cope with life's disappointments and changes. We need to have a good sense of self-worth in order to recognize our place in the world. Self-esteem is important to our psychological well-being and affects virtually everything we say, do, and think. Success in school is often highly correlated to self-esteem. Research generally indicates that American Indian students have lower self-esteem than students from other racial/ethnic groups and that they have more difficulty in establishing tribal self-identity and pride in their Indianness.

This study clearly showed that low self-esteem is a critical factor in the lives of dropouts and that graduates have a significantly better self-image.

Furthermore, it was evident that students with low self-esteem suffered from an identity crisis. They wished they had not been born an Indian, they believed their lives would have been better had they not been born an Indian, and they more often than not felt discriminated against by their teachers.

Low self-esteem in dropouts seems to contribute to a variety of other problems, such as skipping school, using inhalants and other substances, succumbing to peer pressure, and becoming more involved in premature sexual activities, which led to further problems.

## Skipping School

Throughout the study, it was evident that students who dropped out of school begin a pattern of avoiding school. They leave because they do not have much success in school, they do not like school, they are bored, they have problems with teachers, or they are "humiliated" or "ashamed" because of lack of proper clothing, money for school supplies, or lack of money to participate in various school activities. For many of them, they eventually drop out and accept low paying jobs (generally ranch work or baby sitting) in order to help out their families or to gain independence from an abusive home life.

Significant to this pattern of dropping out was the fact that students who skipped school felt that their teachers had very low expectations of them and were insensitive to the Indian culture.

## Teacher Expectations

A number of researchers have attributed the historically poor achievement of Indian students to white teachers who are unable or unwilling to pay attention to the cultural background and values of American Indian students. Some researchers have found that white teachers often demonstrate contempt for Indian students. For the participants in this study, having an insensitive teacher made a significant difference in their lives. These students were more likely to skip school and were also more likely to be abused by school employees including teachers, more likely to become involved in using inhalants, and more likely to become sexually active. There were other significant differences between students who had sensitive, caring teachers and those who did not. Particularly, those students with insensitive teachers were more likely to have low self-esteem and were more likely to be held back a year in school by their teachers.

## Retention

Research of the dropout phenomenon has consistently reported that student retention is associated with an increased probability of dropping out, rather than with improved chances for graduation. Students with retention in two grades have a 100% probability of dropping out.

For this study, 57% of those who dropped out had been retained at least one year in school. Students with the lowest academic achievement were most likely to be held back in school. Participants who reported that their teachers were insensitive and uncaring or had low expectations of them were also more likely to be retained, and students with low self-esteem were most often retained a year or more in school by their teachers.

## Conclusions

American Indian students who drop out of school, for the purposes of this study, demonstrate significant differences in self-esteem, skipping school, teacher expectations and attitudes, and grade retention from those who graduate. Three of these variables, (skipping school, teacher expectations and attitudes, and grade retention) are linked directly to the school itself. The other variable, low self-esteem in the case of dropouts, may in fact be a direct result of what has happened to the student while he/she is in school. Many researchers have noted that American Indian youth tend to show a decline in self-esteem with increasing age. Research has also revealed a negative correlation between years spent in school and academic achievement.

The most fundamental belief about schools is that teachers and students should develop a relationship of mutual respect and trust. Inherent in this belief is the concept that teachers must help students overcome any problems or barriers that they may have to being successful in school. Further, teachers should be accountable, they should be persistent and consistent with youth, they should practice an expanded role beyond that of classroom teacher, and their attitude should be enthusiastic and optimistic.

Results of this study question whether those beliefs, behaviors, and practices are widely occurring in schools on Indian reservations. For those students who are successful, this may in fact be the case, but it does not appear to be happening with students who are at risk of dropping out. Thus, for discussion sake, let us consider the student who comes to school feeling good about himself or herself. By the time this student has reached the third grade (if other researchers are correct) this student has begun experiencing feelings of low self-worth, inadequacies, and alienation within the school environment. This may be because of self-perceived poor academic success or subtle or direct messages of failure, incompetency, or inadequacy from the teacher. It may come from the lack of attention paid to a student, the lack of interaction between the student and the teacher, the lack of reinforcement or encouragement. Whatever the case, suppose this student begins to doubt his/her own abilities which results in lowered self-esteem. By the time the student reaches junior high or high school, he or she may have been retained in grade level, further validating the child's failure. Skipping school often follows this pattern. Children seek to avoid situations that make them uncomfortable and school is uncomfortable for students who are not successful. At the same time these events are occurring, the growing adolescent seems to suffer an identity crisis. It is at this stage that they begin asking questions about who they are. For the Indian adolescent, anger and rejection of being Indian is common. Without a support system in the school or at home to help young people through this period, many turn to peers, who like themselves are going through similar crisis: rejection of self and of schools that do not meet their needs. It is at this period, that peer pressure becomes the greatest. For many students, rebellion follows. They begin to experiment with drugs, drinking, and sex. Outside of school they feel good, but in school they feel bad. So they take the next step -- dropping out.

Graduates who participated in this study reported that family expectations (particularly those of the mother and grandmother) kept them in school. They further noted that a strong belief in themselves kept them in school. On the other hand, a significant number of the dropouts reported living in abusive homes, but also reported being abused by teachers and other adults in their lives. If this be the case, many of the dropouts have little support at home to compensate for their failure in school and their perceived low self-worth. Furthermore, children who are abused most often believe they are unworthy. To have teachers and school employees abuse you is a further validation of unworthiness.

Dropouts seem to be caught up in a web of destruction brought on by a number of external forces. For too long, we have explained the failure of Indian students as a "within child" deficit. That is, the child fails in school because of the deficits he or she brings to school, such as substandard reservation English, cultural differences, dysfunctional homelife, and poverty. Thus, we have failed to look beyond these problems, because if failure is not the fault of the child, then it lies elsewhere. And that elsewhere may be the school.

This discussion will be continued following a look at the findings of the multivariate analyses.

## Multivariate Analyses

Discriminant analysis is a statistical technique which allows the investigation of the differences between two or more groups in relationship to several variables simultaneously. It can be used to describe the way groups differ or to predict membership in a group. In this study, discriminant analysis was used to describe the combination of variables that could be used to distinguish the dropouts from the high school graduates. Stepwise selection was used to determine which variables added mostly to the discrimination between the dropouts and graduates. Wilk's lambda was chosen for this analysis. Four variables had sufficient coefficients to be included in the interpretation of the meaning of the discriminant function. They included: skipping school, self-esteem, socioeconomic status, and retention in grade. Since the coefficients for all four variables were similar, they carried equal weight in naming the discriminant function. Based on the strength of these variables, this discriminant function was named ALIENATION.

## Alienation as the Discriminant between Dropouts and Graduates

### A Theory of School Alienation

The concept of alienation has been used frequently to explain both individual and collective reactions to a vast array of social problems. Because alienation theory points to the contradictions in the social structure, the most commonly proposed functional model has been termed "strain theory," a concept best developed by Robert Merton (1968). In Merton's conceptualization, strain results from a gap between culturally prescribed goals and structurally or institutionally available means of achieving those goals. He perceives this gap as real and perpetual since cultural goals are universal, but access to the means for attaining those goals are not universal; rather they are stratified or differentially allocated across social groups. Stratification itself implies the scarcity of means and resources for attaining the means. Individuals who lack the means and resources often respond with a wide range of emotions from anger and rage to despair and disillusionment. Therefore, the compliant student who stays in school despite poor grades is found at one extreme, while the rule breaking, truant student is found at the other end.[1]

Recently, Farnworth and Leiber, in their study of factors that account for juvenile delinquency and other social deviance, including dropping out of school, have argued against previous researchers who have suggested that the perceived gap between educational aspirations and educational expectations is the source of alienation.[2]

In reference group theory may reside the solution to this debate. Reference groups are made up of the individuals or groups that an individual knows, knows about, or serves as role models, frames of reference, and standards of judgment and comparison in the formation of attitudes, self-esteem, and actions. Reference groups serve as both positive models and negative models. Reference group theory argues that a significant linkage exists between the social constructs and the definitions that emerge from teacher-student interactions and the likelihood that a student will fail.

There are two types of reference group functions that produce distinct perceptions about a student's social world. They include comparative reference groups and normative reference groups. Comparative reference groups most often allow students to determine whether or not they are advantaged or deprived relative to other students. For example, when students compare their experiences to other students within their class, they may discover that other students receive more attention, are treated more favorably, receive more praise, etc. This leads to feelings of personal deprivation which results in feelings of anger and frustration and is acted out by skipping school, feeling unworthy, or sabotaging one's own future by failing to do homework and generally not doing well in school. Using different comparative reference groups may produce different perceptions. For example, the child who comes from poverty in comparing himself/herself with a student of higher socioeconomic means may discover that teachers have higher expectations of those students or treat them with more respect. As a result, the poorer student comes to question whether school is a place for low-income students; perhaps it is a place for affluent students.

The perceptions of students who feel personal deprivation can be improved or enhanced in a negative or positive manner by the normative reference group. This group basically defines the expectations of students of different social status. In effect, they enforce the norms and as a result create a self-blame or system-blame explanation for why students fail. As a result, teachers blame students for their failure. The Native culture of Indian students has been used to explain their poor performance. Teachers have blamed students from poor families and from disadvantaged backgrounds for their shortcomings in school. Currently, students are being blamed for coming from one-parent homes. Students from families on AFDC and other welfare programs have repeatedly been blamed for the conditions of their families.

Teachers can clearly serve as a significant reference group for Indian children, but the content of their messages seems to vary in part with their expectations. Indians students who drop out do not perceive their teachers as caring about them. They do not believe their teachers have anything but low expectations of them.

There are those scholars who would lead us to believe that students who feel deprived are not aware of their deprivation or the gaps between their expectations and experiences. Like Seeman (1959, 1967, 1975), this researcher believes that American Indian students are aware of the gap between their expectations and experiences. Seeman suggested that alienation reflects feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, self-estrangement, and cultural estrangement.[3]

Poverty and socioeconomic status which is so closely intertwined with reference group theory is a major problem for American Indian students.

## Conditions of Poverty

Poverty for American Indian students is not just the socioeconomic status of family. It involves a whole range of behaviors often associated with reservation life and is often erroneously attributed by many experts to being "part of the Indian culture." It is part of the everyday lives of a people who have remained the "poorest of the poor" throughout the history of this country. Poverty involves living in communities where alcoholism, drug abuse, lack of job opportunities, welfare, and inadequate housing is often the norm rather than the exception.

Poverty is part of growing up in a family where the parents are preoccupied or even consumed by immediate survival needs, such as putting food on the table, providing shelter, and paying the utility bills--and have little energy left for loving, playing, nurturing, or teaching. It is a part of learning that if you are poor, you are often rejected--rejected by peers and rejected by your teachers. It is a part of learning that if you are poor, you settle for what others do not want. It is a part of learning that you do not expect much of yourself or of others. It is a part of not expecting to have a better life than your parents. It is a part of accepting that the schools are not going to teach you, and when they do not meet your needs, it only reaffirms your beliefs.

Growing up poor places American Indian students at high risk of dropping out of school. Inadequate nutrition, clothing, and shelter contribute to their personal and family problems. Growing up poor often results in students not feeling very good about themselves. Growing up poor in many cases stifles motivation and dreams and results in broken promises and loss of will.

Growing up the "poorest" of the poor, even on an Indian reservation where the average income is below the national poverty level, contributes to students leaving school prematurely. In fact, it may be the root of many of the problems students encounter in school. Yet rather than confronting the problem of poverty, anthropologists, researchers, and educators have chosen instead to mislabel the conditions of poverty as conditions of culture and have explained away many of the behaviors of students as an "Indian thing" rather than a "poverty thing." As a result, various remedies for the "cultural conflict" experienced by students in school have been devised, with little attention paid to the poverty conditions that have created the problems in the first place.

## Summary

Of the 24 factors used to discriminate between dropouts and graduates, four factors kept surfacing: socioeconomic status, grade retention, skipping school, and self-esteem. When the factors were examined for significant differences, skipping school, self-esteem, grade retention, and teacher expectations and attitudes repeatedly surfaced. When the two groups were interviewed, socioeconomic status, self-esteem, and teacher attitudes surfaced as the primary trends of discussion.

This study demonstrates that it is not the student who is failing, but schools that fail students. It is not the culture, nor cultural discontinuity that creates problems for students. The failure of students to succeed in school is brought about by external forces which attack the student's self-esteem, alienating him/her from the school environment. The majority of the dropouts in this study did not choose to leave school, they were driven out. The alienation of these students began very early, probably in kindergarten. As one bad experience was replaced by another, students began to feel anger, frustration, and lack of self worth. School was not a healthy place or a happy place for them. Some students who experience these negative events remain in school, but many others rebel. The dropouts simply made a decision that they could do without school.

# *Chapter 7*

## Using the Past as a Path to the Future

The American Indian child generally comes from a cultural environment where he/she understands his/her immediate world and his/her learning begins quite early. The child learns at a very young age what is important to his/her family, how he/she should behave in this familiar setting, and what is valued not only by his/her family, but by his/her relatives and the people within the community. None of this learning requires intellectual tools, structured rules, or punitive disciplinary methods. The child learns by observing, imitating, and practicing.

On the other hand, at the age of five or thereabouts, the young American Indian child is thrown into another setting where he/she is asked to make a leap from the familiar culture of the home to the unfamiliar culture of the school. The child is expected to do this without having any transitional or adjustment experiences. He/She has little assistance in formulating and understanding of what is expected in this new environment. More often than not, the child encounters teachers who do not take the time to facilitate a transition and thus becomes lost, confused, detached, frustrated, and angry. Furthermore, the student may encounter a system which labels him/her familiar mode of behavior as "aberrant" and one that needs to be corrected, without any understanding on his/her part as to why the behavior is suspect.

Half of these five-year-olds who enter this school culture will survive, and sadly, half will not. To effect a positive change in these statistics, there are a number of basic approaches that all Indian schools should consider implementing. Some of these approaches may result in a reordering of priorities and resources, but if we are to reach at-risk youth, there is really no alternative. These approaches include:

- Assure a school climate that promotes a positive, humanistic approach to dealing with children and their problems.
- Employ only highly committed teachers who are willing to take on the roles of teacher, counselor, parent, and advocate and deal with the

problems of the "whole child," including a sensitivity to the problems the child may be experiencing at home as well as at school.

- A careful, extensive monitoring and supervision of daily instructional activities should be carried out.
- Student and parent complaints should be investigated in a timely, impartial, and consistent manner.
- Establish expectations where all children can succeed and where teachers are held professionally accountable for the success of students.
- Identify and remediate academic failures of students at each grade level so that any such problems do not persist.
- Offer night school and summer remediation programs for students who fall behind in their classes, regardless of the reason.
- Establish an alternative school, a "school within a school," with a faculty of four or five highly committed teachers who work with a limited number of students (approximately 50-60) so that the students will be involved in a nurturing, caring environment that tends not only to their academic needs but to their emotional, social, and psychological needs.
- Work with community agencies including the tribal police and judicial system to help students from dysfunctional families or those in trouble with the law.
- Establish a peer counseling program and a peer tutoring program so that older children may develop responsibility while working with younger children.
- Establish rules that ensure a positive atmosphere and supportive peer culture.
- Inform and provide in-service to teachers about the problems of the at-risk child and require them to be alert to student needs and problems and to report those concerns.
- Establish a post-secondary planning program with the school using computer labs and in-class activities for mock employment situations and career exploration projects to motivate students to begin thinking about careers, post-secondary education, and employment.

- Form a community task force on at-risk students to determine how the community can help the schools in meeting the needs of students.

Although the above list of components should be a minimum plan for meeting the needs of students, any reform in Indian education and effort to reduce the dropout rate should not proceed without an affirmation of what is really meant when we speak of Indian education.

The history of Indian education has basically reflected the goals and interests of American education in general. Currently, there is no evidence that Indian education is working on a broad scale. It has failed to provide teachers, managers, leaders, doctors, nurses, and other professional and technical personnel in sufficient numbers to allow tribes complete sovereignty or independence from experts outside the Indian community. It has not succeeded in keeping half of the students in school, let alone developing a citizenry that has an opportunity to be gainfully employed or who can realize their dreams and be hopeful of a better future for their children or grandchildren.

On the other hand, Indian education has succeeded to some degree in the construction of a new generation of Indians who have pulled themselves up from poverty and racism "by their own bootstraps," which is a crucial complement to those in power for the continuation of the present educational system. Educators and politicians have used the basic "bootstrap" mythology of individual advancement in defense of the inadequacies of Indian education. This approach has overshadowed many of the long-term problems that have existed, such as poverty, inadequate nutrition, poor health care, substandard housing, and an inadequately educated population, and has resulted in American Indians blaming themselves for their failure and personal conditions rather than protesting the causes of the failure and the need for restructuring Indian schools and Indian communities.

Compounding the problem in Indian education is the fact that American Indians are a small minority in a nation of many larger minority groups, and fragmentation has resulted. In many cases, Indian school districts may have more non-Indians on the school board than Indians. In other cases, political districts and school districts have been gerrymandered in order to deter elections of American Indians to school boards or to state governments. As a result, Indian schools often are not operating in the interest of the American Indians within their own communities, but promote the interests of those outside the Indian community.

In 1966, Norman Chansky wrote about the "untapped good" of high school dropouts where he likened the dropout to a seed. In his analogy, he suggested that just as the seeds must have good soil and adequate moisture to sprout and flourish, so must the school provide a nurturing environment for children to learn. If weeds endanger the growth of the "sprouts," they must be eliminated; so must the problems endangering the child's success. In applying Chansky's philosophy to Indian education, it is time for Indian people to eliminate the "weeds" that have endangered tribal groups and the education of Indian youth since the beginning of their interaction with Euro-Americans.[1]

For starters, we must redefine Indian education from the perspective of Indians. We must develop an educational program that gives meaning to our lives as Indians and our culture, while at the same time instructing students in the underlying ideas of the American culture and providing the intellectual tools needed to survive in a contemporary, global society.

We must listen to our youth. If there is to be a change in Indian education, it must involve them. Contemporary Indian youth are overburdened with the messages we have given them. On one hand, we tell them we want them to stay in school and do well, even go to college and graduate, but at the same time we tell them not to assimilate or they will be rejected by their own people. We tell them we want them to learn their own language, and yet as adults, we speak English to them--listing enumerable excuses why we do not speak or choose not to learn our own Native languages. We raise them to believe that they have a purpose in life and a responsibility to their people and fail to guide them in becoming responsible or in developing goals and purpose.

We must listen to our elders who have experienced the past and tell us that Indian education today is no more than a continuation of the education of a century or two centuries or even three centuries ago. We must learn from them so that we will not continue to repeat the tragedies of the past.

We must challenge ourselves as Indian educators to question our roles within the schools. Many of us, whether intentionally or unintentionally, have become caught up in a struggle between the Indian community and the non-Indian majority who administer our schools. In many cases we find ourselves not as advocates of our communities, but struggling to preserve a system that we know does not work.

As tribal groups, we must challenge ourselves to make some very tough decisions about the direction of Indian education. We must decide, first of all, if the Native language is important to our cultural heritage and our identity; and if it is, we must devise a plan to ensure that it will not vanish within the next generation or two. It may be that many tribes will decide that language renewal and restoration is insignificant to their identity as a tribal people. If a tribe decides otherwise, it must set in motion a plan for language renewal where tribal members take the responsibility for developing it and causing it to flourish as a part of their identity. If the Native language is essential, it should be taught in the schools from K-12, not as a foreign language, but as a language that children will be expected to learn and speak. In doing so, the adults must recognize that they cannot expect of their children what they are unwilling to do themselves. To expect the schools to be the sole purveyors of the language will most likely assure its demise. Therefore, major steps must be taken to assure that the tribe, the community, the parents, and the schools are involved.

A redefined plan for Indian education will require a broad-based approach from Indian teachers, Indian administrators, Indian researchers, community agencies, tribal government, and youth and parents working together as a team. There is no one solution to the problems confronting Indian students or no one answer as to why students are dropping out; however, this study does identify four resiliency factors which may be used as a starting point for developing a dropout intervention/prevention program for American Indian students.

Key features of a comprehensive program must include commitment, coordination, awareness, allocation of resources, and individualized attention for American Indian students at risk. The first step is to make parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members aware of the problem and its causes and consequences, as well as the resiliency factors common to students who are successful. With an understanding of the problem as well as the resiliency factors, educators and parents are in a better position to make a commitment to deal with the problems encountered by American Indian students.

With these thoughts in mind, this writer offers the following recommendations for reducing the dropout rate for all American Indian students, male and female:

- **I believe that Indian schools should be restructured to include three "transitional phases" to enable students to adjust to the demands of an academic environment and to develop an understanding of themselves and what their tribal groups expect of them as adults.**

Although this recommendation will require that students spend an increased amount of time in completing a high school education, it would appear that the extra time spent would be offset by increased graduation rates, a better prepared work force, and a population of young people who have a good understanding of themselves and the needs of their tribes.

These transitional phases would occur three times during the students' elementary and secondary years. The first phase would begin when students first enter school. Instead of a full year of kindergarten, students should enter school where they have an opportunity to learn how to interact, communicate, and respond to the expectations of an academic environment. During this period, parents and elders would work with the teachers in developing a school adjustment plan for Indian students, respective to both the culture of the home and the culture of the school. Teachers within the school would be required to implement teaching strategies that complement the learning environment of the home, while at the same time assuring that students have a period of time to experiment, explore, and adjust to the use of learning tools, such as books, paper, pencils, and crayons, and to improve communication skills to assure better student/teacher interaction. Once students leave this transitional phase and move into kindergarten, an emphasis should be placed on vocabulary development to better prepare them for the demands of reading and writing in the lower elementary years.

The second transitional phase would occur at the end of the fourth grade prior to the time that students enter a middle school environment. From past experience, we know that American Indian students' test scores, achievement tests, and attendance begin to plummet during pre-adolescence. Discipline may become a problem. Attitudes may change. It is during this time that students experience increased negative messages from the school and teachers about their abilities and worth. As these messages accumulate, students begin to disengage from school. It is also during this time that students are changing emotionally, physically, and psychologically. They are gaining independence and maturity. As they come to terms with their changing bodies and changing roles, their intellectual abilities, perceptions of themselves, their peers, their relationships, and their world begin to change as well. It is during this time of change for the students that schools should change as well. A transitional phase at this time should focus on the involvement of elders, responsible community leaders, parents, and teachers in resolving the conflicts experienced by pre-adolescents, while at the same time providing an opportunity for students to learn more about themselves and their culture. During this stage, female students could be guided by female elders and male students by male elders, who would teach them about the traditional gender roles within the society, their ceremonies, and tribal lore and history, while simultaneously using traditional counseling methods to allow for social and psychological adjustment.

The third transitional phase would take place following the completion of the eighth grade. It would provide an opportunity for students to continue their training of traditional roles and expectations under the guidance of tribal elders, while also providing them with an opportunity to perfect their basic skills in math, reading, and writing. Completion of this phase would better prepare students to face the academic rigors of high school courses, while at the same time reinforcing their roles within a tribal community and helping them set goals for their roles as adults.

It is the belief of this writer that such a school structure would not only allow students to be better prepared to handle the stresses of school and to be more academically prepared, but such a structure would also nurture the child's own "spirituality" and tribal identity through the involvement with elders and other tribal people.

> ► **I believe that Indian schools should implement a thorough screening and employment process for personnel to guarantee that Indian students will no longer be subjected to psychological and physical abuse. This screening process would also assure that teachers who are employed have demonstrated excellence or the potential for excellence.**

Indian school districts should implement immediately a screening and employment process for all school personnel, whether professional, paraprofessional, or other support staff. This screening should not only include a thorough background check including references, but should require drug and alcohol testing of each potential employee. School boards should be especially discriminating when it comes to applicants who ricochet about Indian Country, from one reservation to another and from one Indian school to another, like stray bullets. Many of those individuals, who have been found incompetent or unworthy to serve in one Indian district, find employment in another Indian district. This is often the result of districts obtaining unchallenged resignations for the promise of providing future recommendations. In addition, it may be necessary that school boards implement a policy of a two-year "provisional employment" for all school personnel in order to determine if an individual is suitable to teach or work in a reservation setting. During that time, personnel would be required to become "culturally sensitive" through training and involvement within the community. Moreover, residency and involvement within the reservation community should be a requirement, not an option. Teachers who are unwilling or unable to comply with these expectations should be dismissed, or better yet, not employed in the first place.

Further, Indian people should cease regarding the school system as an "employment bureau" where school board members are expected to reward family members and other constituents by providing employment within the school. Politics and family loyalties must cease to guide school policies and employment procedures.

In addition, the number of Indian employees should be increased in the schools. Districts should seek out community elders and respected community persons who can act in a professional capacity (such as traditional counseling) without the requirements of degrees and certification. Furthermore, Indian communities should aggressively seek out young people who demonstrate the interest in and potential for working with children, and provide opportunities for them to go to college and to obtain teaching degrees.

The number of teachers, counselors, and administrators within the schools who are specifically trained to work with high-risk minority children should be increased. American Indians should demand that universities and colleges within their respective states respond to the needs of Indian education and boycott those who do not.

In the event that a tribal college is located on a respective reservation, the school district, community, and tribal leaders should work toward assisting that college in developing four-year degree programs which would allow students the opportunity to remain at home and complete their college degrees. These students in turn would be more likely to stay within the community and serve in professional roles.

- **I believe that we should redesign school district policies that are aimed at keeping students in schools rather than keeping them out.**

A redesign of school district policies should involve school personnel as well as parents and students. Many of the current policies regarding discipline, attendance, truancies, and tardies keep students out of school. School boards, teachers, and administrators should be aware that districts with too many rules are simply asking for those rules to be broken. In essence, districts and their personnel are sending out the message that "we expect you to misbehave." It should be emphasized that expectations among school personnel may actually constitute a self-fulfilling prophecy for children and that harsh disciplinary rules about suspension and expulsion may actually be interpreted by students as an invitation to dropout. Furthermore, disciplinary rules within the classroom that promote failing grades, such as the refusal to accept homework under certain conditions, should cease. Classroom discipline and management rules should be kept to a minimum and should facilitate the student's ability to move about the room and within the school in order to take care of personal and academic needs, as long as the student's behavior does not interfere with or hurt his/her learning or another's learning. District and classroom rules should allow students within a reservation community and school to develop a classroom "family relationship." This would encourage students to be supportive of each other and would allow them to work out problems jointly. In this way, they will learn that rules are important and in their own interest.

- **I believe we should implement an "Adopt-a-Student" program among the faculty, elders, and responsible community persons to assure that each at-risk child has a nonexploitative relationship with at least one adult on a daily basis.**

School districts cannot afford to ignore the research about Indian children which unquestionably demonstrates that children who succeed in school generally have at least one nonexploitative adult relationship. This individual would have the responsibility of encouraging the at-risk students, supporting them, and counseling them. Furthermore, when needed, this individual may be an advocate on the part of the students with the school and other teachers, and would assist in assuring that students are receiving proper services from other agencies.

It cannot be assumed that these relationships develop on their own, nor can it be assumed that the students will initiate such relationships. Within a school setting, "adoptive students" could be assigned either through volunteering or random drawing. Teachers would then be trained in ways of supporting at-risk youth. As a result, the district could be assured that on a daily basis, there would be at least one adult providing positive attention to the at-risk child. Obviously, a critical element of such a plan would include teacher confidentiality with regard to the identity of the "adoptive student." For such a plan to work, the at-risk child should not know that s/he has been "chosen."

The elder volunteers and community persons could serve as advisors and mentors to the students on an "as needed" basis, to assure that at-risk students have an advocate within the community as well as the school. Tribal advocates could help students in ways that teachers may not be able to help. For example, students who experience racism from their peers, or problems involving family loyalties, or other such problems directly related to their tribal identity may be best served by a tribal member. This plan would also allow for the further nurturing and motivation of the student and may in fact complement the development of a "spirituality" found in students who are most likely to graduate from school.

- **I believe that Indian schools must establish a nontraditional curricula as an option for students who are at risk, and incorporate within the implementation process a strong dropout retrieval plan.**

Despite all the other recommendations that this writer has suggested, the fact is that there will always be a percentage of students who will remain at high risk and will not graduate unless other options are available to them. At this point, there is not a body of research that clearly substantiates that a "culturally relevant" curricula will actually make a difference in reducing the dropout rate of Indian students. However, a nontraditional curricula, with an individualized approach in courses like English and math, holds tremendous promise. In addition, the development of semester-long, self-paced course packets in required courses for students who are homebound due to illness or pregnancy, students who are in drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, etc., holds great potential for keeping at-risk youth in school. The use of such a nontraditional curricula could also be combined with the use of cooperative learning components and "real-life" reservation examples and problems whenever possible. Students could be provided experiential educational opportunities where they would participate in programs within their communities such as assisting with an elderly program, a child care center, a Head Start program, or tutoring younger students in the school for credit toward graduation. Such experiences would not only give at-risk students a greater sense of purpose, but would also orient them to the needs of their communities and the world of work.

Furthermore, reservation schools should establish a child care center within the school for students with children and offer special classes in child development, nutrition, and care, as well as counseling for teenage mothers. Specific to this training should be discussions regarding child abuse. This program should coincide with a program addressing the consequences and responsibilities of teen fatherhood.

In addition to the nontraditional curricula, school districts should develop a plan for dropout retrieval which would encourage those students who have dropped out of school to return to school in a way that is nonthreatening to their self-esteem.

## A Final Note

In this chapter, I have tried to provide tribal leaders, school leaders, educators, parents, and community persons within Indian communities a forum for discussion and suggestions for re-evaluating and redefining Indian education. Perhaps as you critique these ideas, you will find that not all of the suggestions are appropriate to your schools or that there are other components that should be initiated in addition to those offered. It is my sincerest hope that this study and the results presented here will at best provide a basis for discussion about Indian education.

We can no longer conceal student failure under the guise of cultural discontinuity or socioeconomic status of the family. We can no longer blame our children for their failures. We cannot continue to place the failure of the past three centuries on a government bureaucracy that has not always had our best interests at heart. We must be willing to protest and change the conditions of our schools and bring about the needed reforms on a community-by-community basis.

Moreover, we should fight any attempts to define ourselves and our cultures by anything but those traits, values, traditions, and characteristics that have been passed down by our ancestors. To submit to or embrace outside interpretations serves no purposes but to fuel the fires of racial prejudices, lower our own self-worth, and inhibit the development and potential of ourselves and our children.

In the end, it is up to us, as American Indian people, to hold ourselves accountable for what happens to our schools and in our schools during the next century. We should make it clear that those who are currently teaching in our schools and running our schools really have no choice except to accept the needed reforms. Admittedly, this may be considered a controversial plan of action, but if we as American Indians are serious about the education our children, we really have no alternative.

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# Chapter 6 Notes

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# *Chapter 7 Note*

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